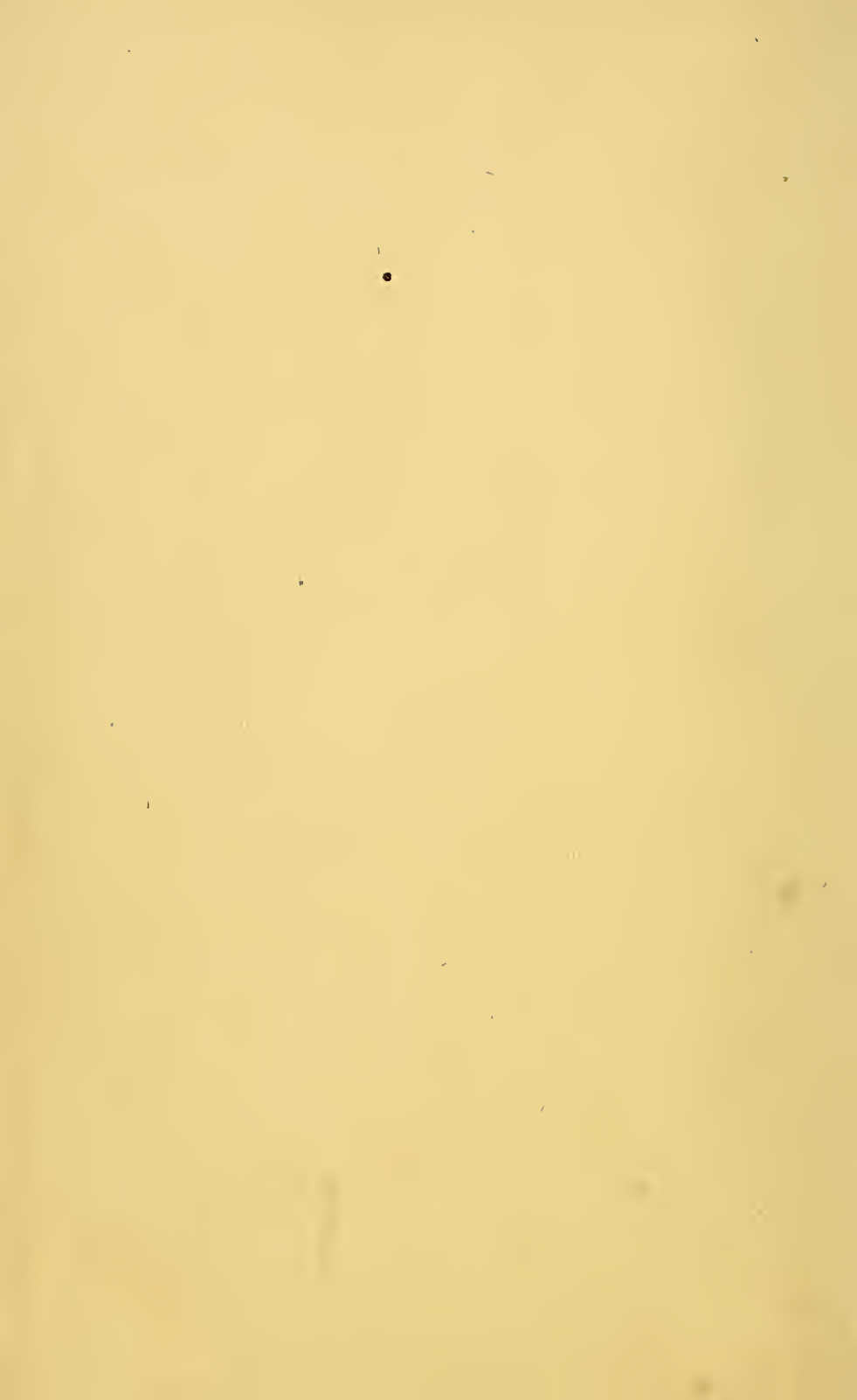





Escape of Claude Duval and Cicely.



Steel engraving
+ woodcuts



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In the apartment
of the Duke

LIFE ON THE ROAD;

OR,

CLAUDE, TURPIN, AND JACK:

BEING A COMPLETE ACCOUNT OF THE

MOST DARING ADVENTURES

OF THE

NOTORIOUS HIGHWAYMEN,

CLAUDE DUVAL,

DICK TURPIN, AND SIXTEEN-STRING JACK.

EMBRACING:

Claude's First Crime—His Capture—Escape from Jail—Meeting with Sixteen-String Jack—Their Adventures and Hairbreadth Escapes—Execution and Resuscitation of Jack—Claude's Escape from the Condemned Cell—Mysterious Arrival of Turpin—Their Desperate Conflict with the Officers—Capture of Turpin—Trial and Condemnation—Claude's Stratagem—The Plan Successful—Escape of Turpin, and his Desperate Revenge—Concluding with one of the most Remarkable Adventures ever recorded.

Illustrated with Four Steel Plates and numerous Wood Engravings.

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LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

CLAUDE DUVAL.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year 1780, the period at which our tale opens, Hampstead Heath was very different from what it now is; it was then a desolate and dreary waste, and bore a very unenviable reputation as regarded the safety of those who were compelled to cross it after nightfall. Robberies were very frequent, and murders of occasional occurrence. In most instances the highwaymen who were the perpetrators of these outrages, escaped the consequences of their evil deeds, owing to their clever disguises, the fleetness of their horses, and the collusion of most of the innkeepers and turnpike men, who found it to their interest not only to conceal the persons of these knights of the road, when closely pressed, but even to mislead and misinform their pursuers.

Among the most celebrated of those who rendered themselves the terror of travellers and the pride of their associates, was the hero of these adventures, who at the opening of this volume was a mere lad in years, but possessing all the germs of daring and bravado that afterwards bore such a fruitful harvest of crime.

We will introduce him and his sister to our readers at the time when, owing to a fancied vision of the spirit of his father, who had been executed for murder, they wandered forth on the heath to take a last look of the gibbet in which swung to and fro the body of their felon father.

The corpse had hung in the gibbet till autumnal rains had bleached face, hands, and clothing. Suddenly there came such a gust of strong wind that it swung the body horizontally from the gibbet. Two figures emerged from among a clump of firs. They were a girl and a lad; the girl clung to the boy, and in terror said:—"Oh, Claude, Claude, are you sure that you saw it?" "Saw it, May? Yes, as plainly as—as—I now see the moon in the clouds. It was the figure of our poor father." "You know, Claude, that our poor father is no more. Let us return home again. Oh, Claude, Claude, you know where this leads to." "I do. But it was towards here that the figure pointed." "You did not scream, Claude." "No, sister May, no. I saw the figure move towards the little window that looks this way, and it pointed in the direction of this place and then I sobbed, 'father, father, father!' when it seemed to roll away like a mist, and I heard nothing but the wind moaning round the cottage."

"It was very dreadful, Claude."

"Yes, yes, and yet I was more sad than frightened, so you see I rose and called to you, May to tell you that I was going out upon the heath, and you

would come with me. I have brought the old pistol with me, May; then we will now for the first time, look upon that which we knew there was to be seen on the heath, and yet never dared approach, for I think that was what my father meant to-night."

As this brief conversation was proceeding, the orphans, for such they were, had been ascending a raised portion of the heath, and when they reached the summit of what might be termed a little knoll, the young moon pressed out again from among the drifting clouds, and the girl in the distance—a distance that looked greater than it really was at that dubious hour, caught a sight of the gibbet. With a cry of agony she threw herself upon her brother's breast, exclaiming in thrilling accents—

"Claude, Claude, it will break our hearts. It will—it will."

The boy guessed well what it was she had seen, and shook with a visible emotion for a few moments, before he dared himself look in the direction to which she had alluded. Then, however, while her fair face was hidden on his bosom, and her long silken hair streamed about him, for it had escaped from its confinement, he shaded his eyes with his disengaged hand, and looked at the gibbet.

It could be but faintly seen, but if only the shadow of it had met his eyes it must have greatly moved him. The moon disappeared again behind a drifting cloud, and like a phantom the gibbet was gone.

"May, dear May," he whispered, "look up and speak to me. I am quite sure that, very dreadful as this thing is to us, that the thought of how dreadful it is must be worse than the reality. Come on, and lean as heavily upon me as you please; I am sure that our father whom we know is in heaven, meant us to pay this sad visit to-night, as we were about to leave the place to-morrow. Come on, do not tremble so, May, courage, courage. We are not so utterly wretched even now, poor, friendless and forlorn, as we really are, as he, Sir Lionel Faversham, who persecuted our poor father to death, and yet knew his innocence."

"He—he was innocent, Claude."

"He was. He told us that he was, and we will believe him as we believe in God, May."

"Oh, yes, yes. It is something to know that he did not do the deed they said he did, Olaude. That although he perished fearfully he perished innocently. I dare not look up again, but—but I will not leave you, Claude. I will go with you, but you will not ask me to look up again. Tell me you will not, for I know it will kill me to do so, or drive me mad, which would be worse. Oh, Claude—Claude, what will become of us?"

She sobbed hysterically upon her brother's shoulder, and stout hearted as the boy was, he now shook with emotion, and could hardly command his voice sufficiently to speak articulately. He did, however, after a slight pause, manage to breathe some comfort to the heart of May.

"Creep gently on," he said, "and you shall not look up, May, if you do not wish. For myself, I feel that before I leave this place, I hope for ever, I ought to take one last farewell glance at our poor father. Come on gently. See, the moon is peeping out again."

It was so. Through a wide straggling opening in the clouds, the bright and beautiful moon showed her silver crescent, and sent down a flood of silvery radiance upon the earth. The two mourners, for such indeed they were, slowly approached the gibbet, and now they were so near to that dreaded and truly dreadful object, that May felt she dared not raise her eyes from the ground, lest they should be blasted by the awful sight before her. To Claude, even, it was an act evidently of desperate resolution to look up, and when he did so, it seemed almost as if, by some more than natural power, he had wrenched his head in that direction. Immediately on the other side of the gibbet was a bridle path, and beyond that again was a deep declivity descending into the road-way for carriages, but all in that direction was gloom, for the tall fir trees completely prevented any observations beyond the gibbet

at which Claude continued gazing, until his eyes were so filled with tears that he could see nothing, and then he dashed them away with his disengaged hand, and looked again.

"Father, father," he said, "they murdered you. You did no murder, although Sir Lionel took an oath that he saw you do it; and why he was so wicked, God only knows."

"Claude, Claude," gasped May, "I—I never told you—but now, in the presence of this dreadful object, I feel that I ought."

"What do you mean, May?"

"I have thought at times that I knew why our poor father offended Sir Lionel Faversham; I do not rightly understand it, but Sir Lionel met me once upon the heath. He dismounted from his horse, and flinging the bridle across his arm, he would walk by my side to our cottage door; and as we went, he asked me if I should like a coach to ride in, and to be a lady; then, when we reached the cottage, he whispered something to our poor father, who thereupon raised his hand and struck him. Sir Lionel left the cottage without a word, and our father turning to me, kissed my cheek, and said, 'Never mention this affair, my May. It is quite over.'"

"And soon after came the—the charge against our father of murdering the steward of Sir Lionel in the shrubbery of Faversham House," cried Claude. "Oh, God—God, I see it all."

He clasped his hands, and dropped upon his knees at the foot of the gibbet.

"I swear," he cried, "I solemnly swear——"

"Oh, no, no, no," sobbed and entreated May. "Take no wild oath of revenge, Claude. Let us now pursue our original intention of going to London, and there seeking some honest means of livelihood, turning our backs for ever upon this place, which must, even to think of, be a horror to us."

"I will have revenge—no—not revenge, but justice. Henceforth a sense of my father's wrongs will make me a foe to all mankind, except those who shall assist me to avenge them; here, in the presence of his poor remains, I swear——"

"Hush! hush! Claude, do you hear nothing?"

The tramp of a horse's foot upon the bridle path, just beyond the gibbet, came upon their ears, and by one accord they both leant forward, to listen in the direction from whence the sound proceeded.

"Who is it?" whispered May. "Who is it?"

"Some chance traveller on the heath," replied Claude. "Listen! listen! and yet it is a strange time of night, and the road is seldom used except by those who are familiar with it, and who are going to Faversham House. Stand in the shadow, Mary,—of—of——"

The gibbet, he would have said, but with a shudder he paused, and did not pronounce the word. May understood what he meant, and crouched down sobbing by the foot of the appalling object. The horseman evidently approached rapidly, and yet there seemed to be an unsteady, uncertain mode of progression about the steed, as it neared the spot where the corpse hung in its grim corslet of chains. It seemed as if the rider, by whip, rein and spur, were urging the animal to more speed than it chose, or had the power from fatigue or otherwise to make. At length, just such another light cloud, which had produced a dimness over the surrounding scene, had swept across the face of the moon, and all was clear again; the horseman reached the point of his route which was directly opposite to the gibbet; then it seemed as if some sudden panic had seized the horse, for it reared and plunged instead of proceeding onwards.

The moonbeams fell upon the figure of the traveller. The light wind carried his voice, as he uttered an imprecation, to the ears of Claude, who, clutching his sister's wrist with a vehemence that forced a slight scream from her lips, exclaimed—

"It is Sir Lionel!"

Like a lump of lead, and with a heavy, dashing sound, the dead body at

this moment fell from the gibbet, and lay in a huddled-up, ghastly mass at the feet of Claude—a mass of rusty iron, tattered clothing, and half decomposed flesh and bleached bones. Claude was upon his knees. The drops of mortal agony rolled from his brow. He plunged his hand into the breast of his clothing. The moonbeams fell glittering upon the barrel of a large holster pistol. It was levelled across the dead body, finding a resting place upon some of the iron work that had enclosed the head of the gibbeted malefactor. A sharp, ringing report followed, and then horse and man rolled over the declivity, and disappeared in the profound darkness beyond. There was a crushing of branches of trees—a struggle and a cry—and then the thundering sound of the horse's hoofs, as he galloped madly onward, came upon the ears of Claude.

"'Tis done," said the lad. "'Tis done. The steed gallops home, but the rider remains on the heath. 'Tis done. I could not miss such a shot as that. Father, you are avenged! You are avenged!"

CHAPTER II.

FOR a few moments now there was a death-like stillness, and Claude might well be, as more calm reflection came to his aid, alarmed at the consequences of the act he had just committed, for however, in the heat of his passion, or the excitement of a moment it might bear the impress of a just retribution, its results could not be a matter of indifference.

It was from the clear intelligence and candid mind of his sister that Claude now sought for counsel what he was to do.

"May, May!" he said. "You know what has happened, May speak to me—speak, do not chill my heart by this silence—dear May speak to me."

"She was silent still, and then Claude by a more accurate look at her pale face, discovered that she had fainted, and probably quite unconscious that any such act as he had committed had been done, and this thought produced a singular revulsion of feeling in Claude.

"She knows nothing," he said to himself. "She fainted perhaps before the shot was fired, and it was not all fright which caused her to do so—exhaustion—weakness from want of proper food, has some share in it.—Oh God, that it should be so. That one so good and so beautiful as you are, my poor May, should want what to so many are superfluities. What can I do. What—what ought I to do?"

He rested his head upon his hands for some few moments, and then he made a resolution which will be best understood in its results, which were immediate.

After satisfying himself that May was still perfectly insensible, he gently crept from her side, and passing the gibbet, made his way to the brink of the abyss down which Sir Lionel Faversham had rolled. Then holding tightly to an alder tree which grew close to the edge, he tried to pierce with his eyes the gloom below, but he could see nothing. The rank vegetation effectually excluded all light, and to all appearance it seemed just like looking into a well. His determination, however, was made, and clutching at whatever roots or branches afforded him a chance of support, he slowly but safely descended the precipitous bank.

The depth was about thirty feet, and it took Claude some time, before he reached the road-way that wound through the hollow of the heath at its base. The moon was still struggling with the fleecy clouds which seemed resolved, like some advancing host, to obliterate her brightness, but at intervals there was light enough to distinguish one object from another. The horse Claude knew was not there, but the rider he fully expected to find, nor was he dis-

appointed, for a long dark object met his gaze, and he thought that a strange groaning sound came faintly upon his ears.

Creeping along with his body bent almost to the earth, and his hands outstretched, he made his way for the few paces that separated him from the body, and then he touched it. At the moment of doing so he shuddered, for there was to the imagination of the boy, something terrible about a corpse; but, muttering some indistinct words to himself, in which the name of his sister was intermingled, he gathered courage and began to execute his purpose, which was to find if the fallen man had money with him, which would enable him (Claude) and his sister to reach the metropolis in safety, and there subsist for a time until some better fortune should enable them to look more smilingly upon their fate.

"It is a just retribution," said Claude, "I wonder if he carries a purse with him? This need never be known to May. It never shall be known, or to her perception each coin, and each particle of food purchased with it, would seem to be accursed."

His fingers trembled so, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could make the requisite search for the valuables which Sir Lionel might be supposed to have about him, but at length he found a long silk purse, which, from its weight, and the rich jingle of its contents, he judged contained what to him was a considerable sum in gold. Twice his hands had touched a bunch of gold seals that hung from the watch-pocket of Faversham, and as often had Claude shaken his head and left them, but now he lingered and listened attentively—not a sound came upon the night air, and for the first time, he showed a symptom of that mad-brained recklessness, which was a characteristic of his after career, for snatching the watch from the pocket, where it had lain so snugly, he said,—

"It's just as well to be able to know the time when one pleases."

The watch was a repeater, and in his haste, Claude pressed the spring, when, to his surprise, for he had no notion of such a contrivance, the little silvery bell struck one, and then chimed a quarter.

"Hush! Hush!" said Claude, quite involuntarily, as he sprung to his feet. He then placed both watch and money in his pocket, and commenced clambering again up the steep ascent to where he had left May.

There was a strange feeling at his heart now, and a kind of dizziness about his brain, which Claude could not, or fancied he could not account for, although had he been a little more inquisitive into the sources of his feelings, and a little more candid with himself, he might have come to the conclusion, that those feelings were the result of the consciousness that he was both a murderer and a robber. The excitement of a moment and strongly outraged feelings might be something in extenuation of a pistol-shot, but as regarded the purse and the watch, there could be invented no such excuse.

But the deed was done, so that Claude scrambled on, and when he had just reached the brink of the precipice, he nearly fell the whole distance back again, so startled was he by the sudden touch of some one on his arm from above, and the pronunciation of his name. The accents were those of May, and he recovered, saying—

"Oh, May, how you frightened me!"

"Claude, Claude, what has happened. Tell me what has happened. Did not Sir Lionel fall over the bank, Claude?"

"Yes, and after that I heard the horse's hoofs upon the road towards the Bull and Bush."

"Then he was not killed by his fall?"

"Certainly not, May—she knows nothing, and in her confusion has forgotten the pistol shot," thought Claude, "and so far things turn out as I would wish them."

"Shall we not go home?" said May, placing her arm across her eyes, lest they should take in a view of the horrible gibbet.

Claude was silent for a few moments, and then he said:—"You know, May, we have talked often of leaving here for ever; why should we not do so to-night? There is only the cottage that we need care for—suppose we go to London at once, May, and see what fortune has in store for us. I have a little money, and we will so husband it that it shall last us a long time. What say you, May? The distance is short—what is that?"

The jingling of bells and the creaking of wheels had come upon his ears, and almost as he asked the question of what it was, he replied to it by adding—

"Oh, it is the Hendon wagon, which has just left the Bull and Bush. There is a chance for us, May—we can meet it about half a mile further on, where the road rises to the level of the heath, and so go on to London, and never again with my good will shall I look upon Hampstead heath by night or by day."

"We are alone," sobbed May, "in the wide world. We have no friends but each other. Where you go, Claude, there will I go, and Heaven knows, this place is too full of heart-breaking recollections to bind us to it. Let us go at once."

Claude was well pleased to find no opposition from May to leaving, and without casting another look at the awful spectacle that was at the foot of the gibbet, although they both lingered a little, and May wopt bitterly, they left the spot, making their way across the heath, guided by the monotonous sound of the bells that were at the heads of the wagon horses.

"Stop!" cried Claude, as he and May met the wagon near the Castle. "Stop. Can you give us a lift to London? We can pay."

The wagoner paused and stopped his team, and seemed to be considering a little, after which he said, half aloud—

"It's not very likely, now, surely, and I may as well earn a shilling." Then he cried in a louder voice. "Scramble in at the back, you will find lots of straw. Be quick about it, for I am rather late to-night—that's right—but, look you, if your places are wanted you must get out again and ask no questions, mind that now."

"There will be room enough for us, and a dozen others too, I should think," said Claude, as he assisted May into the wagon, and sprang in after her.

"I don't know that," muttered the wagoner, "and I am half afraid now of the captain. Yet it's a chance, and I don't see why I should not earn an extra shilling when I can. They are only a boy and girl, too, and can be easily put out if needs be, and yet—I don't know—I wish I had'nt—"

Thus muttering his doubts and fears about something which was quite unintelligible to Claude, the wagoner put his horses again in motion, and they crept at a lazy pace over the heath, which then had none of the snug villas and smart cottages about it that it has now; for with the exception of two trees, and Lord Mansfield's large house, there was not a more desolate spot to be found, at night, than the beautiful heath of Hampstead.

For a good half mile further on, no house or light was to be found, and the wagon, which was a large covered one, with an amazing width of entrance at the back, and containing nothing but a quantity of loose straw, had advanced about half that distance when Claude's heart beat violently as he heard distinctly the gallop of a horse across the heath, for a dread that in some inexplicable way the murder and robbery of Sir Lionel Faversham might have been discovered, and suspicion placed upon him, was busy at his brain. A sensation of absolute sickness came over him, as he heard the hollow ringing sound of the horse's hoofs upon the common.

The wagon stopped.

"Hilloa!" cried the wagoner, "do you hear, or have you gone to sleep? You can't stay any longer. Come out directly, or it will be worse for you! Come out, I say, or we shall all be in a nice mess. Confound me for a fool to take you till I was clear of the common!"

"Who is it? who is it?" cried Claude, as the sound of the horse's feet came nearer and more distinct, giving evidence that he who was approaching would soon be close to the wagon.

"You would be none the wiser if I told you," replied the man, speaking hurriedly and betraying the utmost anxiety to get rid of his guests. "Scramble out any way, so that you be off at once. It's too late, he's here, I'm in for it at last!"

All this happened with such rapidity, and May clung so closely to her brother who was likewise rather entangled in the straw that lay so thick at the bottom of the wagon that even had he felt fully inclined to obey the hurried and rather vehement commands of the wagoner, he could not have done so with sufficient celerity to save the latter part of his speech, to the effect that it was too late. Under these circumstances, then, Claude did the best thing he could, which was to remain ready to act according to circumstances, getting as far as he could, with May still clinging to him, to the upper end of the capacious vehicle.

The night was now darker than before, for a mass of clouds had come across the young moon, threatening to obscure its light effectually for some hours, so that Claude had no sense but that of hearing through which he could obtain any information.

"What do you tell me old Peter," cried a careless laughing sort of voice, "two persons in the crib—eh? A girl and a boy! Well, well, no matter. I like good company, and they will be none the worse for a ride to London with me. Where are they? Tell them to get up to the far end and they will come to no harm. Throw open the canvass, Peter—don't you hear that there's half-a-dozen horsemen on my track?"

To the intense astonishment of Claude and the alarm of May, the horse with its rider bounded lightly into the wagon, and the canvass at the back was immediately closed upon them both.

"Down, Silversides! down, mare!" cried the man, and by the motions of the horse among the straw, Claude was aware that it had lain down on its side. He drew May as far as possible away from dangerous contiguity to the animal's feet, and then mustering courage to speak, he said:

"Sir, we are not disposed to be in your way. We only want a lift to London."

"Very good," was the careless reply; "but mark me, my lad, if you prate of what you have seen to-night I'll find you out, if you were as difficult to get at as truth in the bottom of a well, and cut your throat! Who are you?"

"My name is Claude Duval, and this is my sister May. Some people, however, will call me Jack, I don't know why. Pray who are you?"

"Humph, you want to know who I am?"

"I should like to know, for somehow I think we shall be friends yet."

"Do you my lad—well then I don't recollect my real name, but among my pals I am called Sixteen-string Jack, and this is my mare, Silversides."

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the mysterious personage who had so unceremoniously sprung with his horse into the wagon, had thus spoken, there was a pause of some few minutes, duration, for neither Claude nor his sister could make much of the rather singular name of Sixteen-string Jack, and they feared to make a comment upon it, lest they might offend one who evidently had the power to turn them out of the wagon if he chose.

"What are you thinking about," at length cried Jack. "I warrant now

you are nicely puzzled to know what I am, so I will tell you; I keep a toll on the Great North Road, and as I don't like to trust anybody to collect my dues I do it myself, and as there are unreasonable people who object to pay, I carry a good brace of bull dogs with me."

"Bull dogs, sir?" said Claude.

"Aye, pistols. These are my bull dogs, and they never bark when I don't want them, but when I do they open tongue to some purpose. Then again some folks after they have paid, go prating about it, and get others to ask disagreeable questions, so that I give the spur to my good steed, Silversides, and off we are over hill and dale like the wind. It's a brave life, I'm the real lord of many manors. The king of the road, and whoever travels by moonlight is a subject of mine, and must pay my taxes. What do you think of all that, my lad?"

"I hardly know what to think," said Claude.

"Don't speak to him," whispered May, "don't speak to him, he's a highwayman, Claude. Let us get out of here and walk."

"Hist!" cried Sixteen-string Jack, suddenly, "not a word on your lives. Don't you hear?"

Claude listened, and then distinctly heard the tramp of horses' feet, and in a few moments a loud authoritative voice cried:

"Hilloa! Pull up, wagoner. How far have you come, my man?" and by the trampling of horses and the bustle around, Claude felt certain that several horsemen had congregated about the wagon. He could hear too, by the hard breathing of the steeds, that they had been going at a quick pace, while the tone of inquiry of him who spoke was hurried and anxious.

"Woa!" cried the wagoner, and the horses paused, while the jingling of the bells at their heads nearly ceased—"Woa! Anan, sir? what *wur yow* a saying?"

"How far have you come down the road, my man?"

"Oh, how far? From Goulder's Green."

"Has a horseman passed you on the heath?"

"One did. A chap on a bay horse, and wasn't he a going it. Hounds! I thought he'd a been right over me, wagon and all, I did. Hark ye my man says he, if you say you saw any one to-night on the heath,' says he, 'you may as well cut your own throat,' says he, 'cos it will save me the trouble,' says he, 'of finding you out and cutting it for you,' says he, and then off he was like a shot; drat him, I aint afeard of him, drat his impudence."

"Our man without a doubt," said the horseman. "Which way did he go?"

"Beyant there, to Caen Wood I take it."

"Follow me, gentlemen; this will be a good night's work if we rid the neighborhood of that notorious highwayman, Sixteen-string Jack; I fired at him, and perhaps he is wounded, in which case he cannot hold out long. This way, gentlemen, follow me, and don't spare whip nor spur."

The party of pursuers galloped off across the heath, and the wagoner without taking any further notice of the transaction, put his horses into motion again and entered the village of Hampstead.

"They were looking for you," said Claude to the highwayman.

"They were, my lad, but you see they are baulked; I wonder what the time is, I gave my watch this morning to Nan Eyles, and the one a gentleman lent me about half an hour since, upon the heath, has run down."

"I can tell you the time," said Claude, on the impulse of the moment producing the repeater he had taken from the pocket of Sir Lionel Faversham. "I can tell you exactly the time, I dare say, and it strikes too, though I don't know how exactly to make it."

It was too dark for the watch to be seen, but the highwayman was surprised to find that such an article was in the possession of such a lad, and he said:

"Hand it to me. If it be a repeater I can make it strike."

By the feel, rather than by any aid from the dim light that now and then

from a miserable oil-lamp came into the wagon, Claude managed to place the watch in the hands of his new acquaintance, and then he had the pleasure, in a moment, of hearing the little fairy-like bell sound the hour.

The different persons in that wagon were very differently affected by those slight and musical sounds.

The highwayman felt that there was a mystery attached, and he held his peace, and listened for the remarks of his companions, as being most likely to afford him some clue to what was as yet a perfect puzzle.

Claude was occupied with a mixed feeling of joy and pain. He listened to the sounds of the repeater with almost childish pleasure, but he felt at the same moment that May's suspicions would be aroused, and that he must in some way or other, either by falsehood, which he held in contempt, or by the plain truth, satisfy his sister's doubts.

But to poor May the tinkling sounds were full of naught but horror. Almost intuitively she seemed to be aware that the trinket was the prize of some lawless deed, committed when or how she knew not. She had penetrated enough of their fellow companion's character to dread any closer connexion with him, and her soul was overshadowed by dread of disasters, none the less appalling for being undefined, which loomed fearfully out from the darkness of the future. She felt that her brother's fate was in some way connected with the possession of the watch, which had appeared among them as mysteriously as if it were indeed one of those gifts of seeming value with which the spirits of evil were said to tempt men's souls. A moment only elapsed, when in a startled and fearful voice she broke the silence.

"Oh! Claude, Claude," sobbed May, "how came you by a watch?"

"What matters it," answered Claude, "where it came from? I have it, and that ought to be sufficient. It will make a pretty ornament for you, dear May, at holiday times, when fortune smiles once more upon us."

"Nay, talk not so, dear brother," whispered May, "I could feel no pleasure in wearing it, unless I knew how you came by it; and poor orphans as we are, and homeless wanderers too, Claude, I dare not hope for happy times for many a weary day to come. Set my heart at ease, then, and do not aggravate our present misfortunes by filling my mind with fears that I dare not give utterance to;" and May threw herself weeping on his neck.

"Fears! what have you to fear, May? Did you never hear of one person losing a watch on a dark night, and another person finding it?"

"Such a thing is quite possible," said May, "but even then, Claude the watch would not be yours to keep or give to me. It would be your duty to hand it over to those who would find an owner for it."

"And many thanks I should get for that, sister. No, no, dry your tears, dear May, and rest satisfied that the watch shall not pass from my hands to another, owner or not owner, unless he who demands it is a better man than myself."

"Claude, Claude," exclaimed poor May, "how can you grieve me by saying so?—you cannot mean what you say."

"Ho, ho," cried Sixteen-string Jack, "I find you are a lad of mettle—eh? Come you may trust me, my lad. How came you by it? It's a dangerous companion for you, if there should be any hue or cry. You might do a worse thing than make me your friend in such an affair. You are silent—you are afraid to trust me. Perhaps that's natural; but have not I trusted you. A word from you to the horsemen that a minute since stopped the wagon, and I should have been taken. I could not have held my own against such odds, and then, as sure as to-morrow's sun will rise, I should have swung at Tyburn. I would fain do you a good turn. This watch may be your destruction."

"Keep it yourself, sir," said May, "and for God's sake, Claude, say not another word about it!"

"Nonsense, pretty face," laughed Jack; "for a pretty face I am sure you have, however, let him speak out."

"I took it," said Claude, "upon the heath, from Sir Lionel Faversham."

"You robbed Sir Lionel Faversham to night upon the heath? The devil. And is this the first little adventure of the sort?"

"The very first."

May burst into tears, and clung convulsively to her brother, as she sobbed,—

"The last likewise—the last, Claude, send back the watch, and ask for forgiveness. Oh, Claude, I thought we were unhappy, but I knew not what wretchedness really was until now; you will do as I implore you, Claude? speak, speak to me, and say you will do so."

"A dangerous course, miss," said Jack; "it's too late."

"Yes," said Claude, drawing a long breath, "yes it's too late."

May sobbed bitterly, while the highwayman whispered to Claude,—

"You have done now what cannot be undone. As for expecting any mercy, even if you chose to seek it from Sir Lionel Faversham, you might as well expect a famished tiger merely to pass you in a lonely place with his compliments. If he can find you, he will not rest until you are in the cart on your road to Tyburn. You are fortunate in coming across me, for I can afford you both counsel and protection. When we get to London I can find an asylum for yourself and your sister until the hue and cry is over, and then you can take your own course, and unless I am very much mistaken, I can guess tolerably well what that course will be. A good horse!—a pair of pistols—a light heart—and—"

"The road!" cried Claude. "Life on the road! I am poor and friendless—my father's bones bleach upon the heath. The sense of deep wrongs lies rankling at my heart, and I cannot bow and smile my way through life for a sup or a crust. The road for me! A short life and a merry one—and the sooner it begins the better."

"Hurrah," said Jack; "you are the lad for me. Here we are at the King's Head, near Kentish Town, where I can give you a welcome until to-morrow, and then take you to a safer place still."

"No, no," cried May, in a voice that was almost a shriek of despair. No, no,—oh, God, no!—Claude, Claude, you are mad!—You know not what you say!—I implore you by the tie that binds us, orphans as we are, to each other, to pause, Claude, Claude, for my sake if not for your own, I beseech you not to give way to this frightful temptation. If you would seek happiness or peace, seek it in honor, truthfulness, and in honesty. You are yet on the threshold of life; you have not sinned deeply, Claude. Oh plunge not rashly onwards in the desperate course you suggest."

"Really, my dear," said the highwayman in a bantering tone, "you—"

"Peace, sir," said May, "interrupt me not; I am talking with a sister's love to a brother. Shame, shame, upon you who have become hardened in vice, to strive to warp him round to a love of your own evil courses. Shame, shame, upon you, for your own guilt, but doubly shameful is it to snatch from a right course, a being, who cannot know as you know, the evil that presents itself to him in such fleeting but alluring colors."

"Very good," said Jack, "say your say, my lass, and let your brother take his own course, it don't matter to me; my career is fixed."

The wagon had stopped, and a glare of light came into its interior from a lanthorn that a man who had come out of a public-house door held up, while he shaded his eyes with his hands. The scene within the wagon was a strange one. The highwayman's horse, which occupied by far the greater portion of the interior, lay upon its side, while Sixteen-string Jack kept his hand upon the creature's head. The highwayman's dress could now be distinguished—he wore a scarlet coat with large lappels, slightly disclosing an embroidered waistcoat, and the lace ends of a rich, but not by any means scrupulously clean cravat. From the tops of his boots hung a knot of colored ribbon, from which he derived his cognomen of Sixteen-string Jack, and take him altogether he looked the very beau ideal of the knight of the road at that

strange period when highwaymen were as much public characters as Members of Parliament are now. Claude was standing up, and steadying himself by holding part of the awning of the wagon, while May was kneeling at his feet in that attitude of intensity she had assumed to warn him from his desperate purpose of taking to the road for a livelihood.

"Hiloo, captain!" said the man, "What's it all about? Have you got some company?"

"I have," replied the highwayman, and then, turning to May, he added, "you are doing me a great injustice; you fancy I want to persuade your brother to go upon the road, but you quite forget that he has been there already, and that all I offer him is protection from the consequences of what has happened on Hampstead Heath, to-night. Do you fancy now that he has nothing else to do but to wish to lead a quiet, virtuous life, and that he will be permitted to do so? I can tell you it is not so. He will be hunted like a wild beast for what he has already done, and all I want him to do, is to stand at bay a little. But you may settle it between you, what can it matter to me?"

"Claude, do not answer him;—Claude—Claude."

She rose, and flung herself upon her brother's neck, so that he was prevented from making any movement towards Sixteen-string Jack, but he held out his hand and the highwayman nodded, as much as to say, I comprehend you, you have made your choice, and then, pointing to the inn, the door of which was kept rather uncomfortably open, he paused a moment as if expecting Claude to make an effort to release himself from his sister's detaining embrace, and follow him.

"May," whispered Claude, "May, you know not what you advise, I will speak to you to-morrow; let us to-night accept of rest and shelter where we can."

"No—no. Better starve—better be destitute in the streets, than enter that house."

"I cannot make such return for a kind offer."

"Say you will not, Claude, and I shall understand you, although I shall never believe that it is you who speaks."

"Listen to me, May; you shall be kept like a lady, your happiness and comfort shall be my first care, you shall want for nothing. Let me go—let me go."

She clung tighter still to him; Sixteen-string Jack laughed, and Claude's cheek reddened, for he thought as boys are apt to think, that it reflected upon his manhood to be detained thus by his sister, so he spoke more angrily.

"May, I say, release me."

As these words were uttered he flung her from him, and jumped from the wagon. With a cry of grief she followed him, and clung again to his apparel, but again he shook her off, and rather roughly too, so that had not Sixteen-string Jack interposed his arm she would have fallen, but when she found to whom she owed the temporary support, she shrunk back from him with a shudder, and clasping her hands, looked for a moment or two earnestly at Claude.

"Come, sister May," he said, "the rain is falling and the wind blows still, come in."

"No," she said, "no; since it must be so, farewell, Claude."

In a moment she darted off, and was lost to sight in the darkness.

"Stop—stop," cried Claude "May, you will not go alone and destitute. Stop—oh stop!—listen, May, I have more to say to you."

He would have rushed after her, but the highwayman held him by the arm, as he cried,—

"Pho! pho! she won't run far. You will have her back again soon. Where is she to go to? make yourself comfortable. Landlord, bring a bowl of punch, and let it be the best you can make. I and my young friend must be better acquainted."

"But—but," said Claude. "But my sister——"

"Oh, you will see her again soon enough. Besides, what idea would you have of her affection, if she starts off from you, the first time there is any little difference of opinion, while you, as a man ought to know best what to do?"

This was attacking Claude at his weak point.

"Oh yes," he said. "We men are not to be guided by women."

"Of course not. Come in, come in. The punch, landlord, the punch. The wind is cold indeed to-night. Claude Duval, you will be famous; I am no bad judge of such matters, and something seems to tell me that there never was yet a knight on the road, who will be able to compare with you. I shall be proud of you as a friend. Come on, come on, and we will talk more of it."

CHAPTER IV.

Two years have elapsed since the incidents recorded in our three previous chapters. It is a cold—bitterly cold night in January. The east wind is scattering sleet and hail like small sparks of sharpened steel through the air, and all as far as the eye can reach is darkness and desolation. In the midst of such a scene, and at such a time, a solitary horseman is trotting across Ealing Common.

It is not by a regular bridge road that this horseman proceeds—on the contrary, whenever by the sound, and it is only by the sound that he can come to an opinion, in consequence of the darkness around him, he finds that his horse is on a beaten track, he turns aside until again there is nothing beneath the cautious hoofs but the green turf, or small pools of water into which it almost every moment splashes.

"Now, by all that's good," muttered the horseman, as he clenched his teeth against the keen wind, and with his disengaged right hand dashed the half blinding sleet from before his eyes. "I would not have come out on such a night as this, had it not been that the gaming table has so completely cleared my purse that it sadly lacks replenishing. It will look positively ungentlemanly to stop anybody on such a night, but needs must when a certain old friend of mine drives, so hurrah for my old luck, and here I am upon the high road at last."

There was just light enough to distinguish the principal road that went across the common from the darker color of the grass that fringed it, and the solitary horseman now kept within half a dozen paces on the turf by the side of it.

By the turn he had now made at right angles to his former course, his back was turned towards the cutting sleet that was driving through the air, and he certainly got on much more comfortably than before, while he half sung to himself a popular air of the day, and when he fancied, and in most cases it was but fancy, he saw a hillock before him, he made the obedient horse give a demi-vault, which it executed with surprising grace and ease.

"Ah, my good Sue!" apostrophised the rider. "My good Sue, what should I do without thee? What should I be without thee, my gallant lass—fleet of foot—long in wind—sagacious, and more faithful than many human beings. I love thee, my Sue!"

As he uttered this panegyric upon his horse, he patted the neck of the animal, which by a short neigh seemed to be fully sensible that just then it was a special object of its master's commendations, and to be well pleased accordingly.

Suddenly the horseman gave the rein a peculiar touch, and the steed stood as motionless as though it had been carved in stone.

"Hush! hush," he said, "my old acuteness of hearing is bothered by the wind and the sleet, or I hear the sound of horses' feet."

After then listening for a few moments he still was in doubt, for he suddenly flung himself lightly off the horse, and placed his ear nearly on a level with the ground to listen; this process quite satisfied him, and vaulting into the saddle again, he said,

"Yes, some one comes, I am not mistaken, and I have only to hope that his purse is well lined. It will be a great insult to a gentleman of the road if it be not, and must be resented accordingly. We shall see, we shall see. The horse's footsteps sound clean and clear as though it were no common hack. Now Sue, my lass, we may have a little adventure to warm our bloods, and faith we need it on such a night as this."

The sound of an approaching horse at an easy canter, was now plainly perceptible, and the highwayman, for such our readers of course conclude him to be, walked his steed gently along the road, to meet the advancing traveller, and the dusky figures of a horse and man were soon seen against the leaden-colored sky.

Thus approaching each other, but a very few minutes could elapse ere the highwayman and his intended victim came face to face, and saw as much of each other as upon such a night could be seen.

"Halt!" said the highwayman, "halt! answer me one question, Sir Traveller, and answer it upon your honor."

"What do you mean? Keep off, as you value your life," said the traveller, in stern accents; "I am armed."

"Very good. It is unsafe to travel unarmed, and not always safe even with arms; but to my question: are you a gentleman? by which I mean, one who eats the bread of idleness, and is not engaged in any business pursuits."

"A gentleman!" said the stranger, "who dare dispute my right to that title?"

"Good. I never condescend to stop any but gentlemen, and since you assert your right to the designation,—stand and deliver!"

"What?"

"Your money—watch—rings—or, your life!"

"Now, by Heavens, this is the most barefaced and impudent attempt at robbery I ever heard of. You will consult your own safety by getting from before my path."

"You are mistaken, sir; I wish to behave towards you with all due courtesy, but you will best consult your own case, by complying with my demand. As for my safety, I set my life upon casts like these, and am willing to stand the hazard of the die."

"Take it, then," said the stranger; and drawing a pistol from his pocket, he snapped it in the face of the highwayman. The powder flashed in the pan, without discharging the weapon, and the traveller, casting it to the ground with an imprecation, was fumbling in his pocket for another, which did not seem to be so ready to his hand, when, with a suddenness and violence that could not be resisted, the highwayman closed with him, and grasped him by the collar, exclaiming as he did so, and flung him from his seat,—

"You should keep your powder dry."

"Villain," cried the traveller, as he lay half stunned by the fall.

"Not so," replied the highwayman, "if I were, what would there be to hinder me repaying you in kind for your intention to blow my brains out, by actually performing that process upon the small quantity you evidently only possess. Once more, your money and valuables!"

He had dismounted; and while his horse, Sue, stood profoundly still, the stranger's steed, alarmed at the confusion, scampered away over the common, and was out of sight in a moment in the darkness.

"Take my purse, and here, too, is my watch. I have but one ring, and

that I wish to keep—not so much on account of its value, as from recollections connected with it.”

“Oh, certainly. Don’t say another word about it.”

“You are chivalric in your way,” added the gentleman, as he made a vain effort to rise, but found that he had struck his head so severely against a stone, that the darkness seemed full of strange grotesque shapes, swimming before him.—“I—I ask you a favor——”

“What is it?”

“I can scarcely speak. I think I shall faint from this fall. There is a travelling carriage coming with three ladies and one man; spare them. One lady is an invalid.”

“Which way is it coming? From town or country. Nay, you have already said so much, you may as well give me full information. You are silent—ch? Why he has fainted, I suppose. He must be seriously hurt, for it is not from any faint-heartedness he has gone off in this way. But if people will be obstinate, and resist the tolls, they must take the consequences. I won’t leave him here though, to be run over by somebody, I can’t be far off old Jarvis’s place at Hanger-hill. If I could get him there, he would be safe until the morning, and Jarvis could easily say he found him lying on the common. It shall be so; Sue, my lass, Sue!”

The horse was close to him in a moment.

“This is not what you are exactly used to, my Sue,” continued the highwayman, “but at a pinch you won’t object, I daresay. Humph! a tolerable weight, though thin enough.”

He had lifted the insensible form of the traveller, and laid it as well as he could across the horse’s back, and then taking the bridle in his hand, he guided it across the common, with which at that dark hour he seemed wonderfully familiar, until he reached some trees skirting a low hedge, which formed the boundary of a little garden surrounding a miserable looking cottage. Then he paused, and blew a whistle in a peculiar manner, and in a few moments a man appeared at the door of the cottage, with a lantern in his hand.

“Jarvis is it,” cried the highwayman.

“My noble captain! has anything happened amiss?”

“No, but here is a gentleman who has had a fall upon the common, and muddled his brains for a time. I want you to let him lie quiet till the morning, when no doubt he will be all right, and relieve you from further trouble. If he remains on the common, who knows but somebody might rob him—ch, Jarvis?”

The man put the lantern on the ground, and by placing his hands on his sides, was evidently upon the point of bursting out into a roar of laughter at what he considered such a famous joke, when he was checked by the highwayman’s crying,—

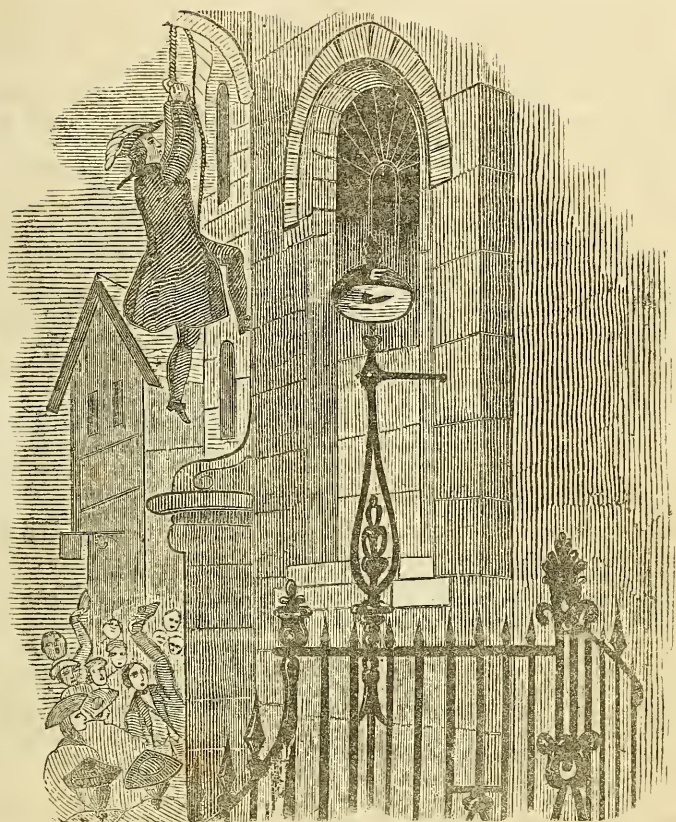
“Peace, peace! I have no time to spare.”

“Oh certainly, captain; another job a-coming, I suppose?”

“Possibly.”

The still insensible stranger was lifted from the horse’s back and carried into the hut, after which the highwayman mounted his horse again, and went back to the common at a hard gallop, until he reached the main road again that went across it, when once more he drew rein and listened.

“I hear nothing,” he muttered,—“could he have been deceiving me for any purpose? I am quite certain no travelling carriage has passed here to-night. Shall I be content with what I have already done, or shall I wait for it. Humph! ladies he said, and one man; there will be more purses than one, and who knows but this fellow may take credit to himself when he returns to tell the story, for frightening me from an attack on the carriage. No, my Sue, we will not be put off by the story of an invalid lady; and if there be one, we will be so gentle that she shall feel no shock to her nerves. Ha! It comes.”



He distinctly heard, during a lull in the wind, the grinding sound of carriage wheels in the soft sandy soil. The horse too, seemed as though it pricked up its ears, and was fully alive to the excitement of its master's adventures. He paced slowly onwards in the direction of the approaching sounds, while the highwayman in a low but not unmusical voice sung to himself a popular ditty, said to be composed by himself:

There's no life like a life on the road,
 A good steed and a light heart give me;
 While misers are counting their gold,
 I am careless, and happy, and free.

There's no life like a life on the road,
 A pair of good bull-dogs give me;
 Let plodders go sleepless with sighs,
 As a king of the road I shall be.

He paused again to listen, and it was only at intervals when the wind lulled that he could do so, as, blowing as it did from him in the direction from which the carriage was coming, it carried the sound away, instead of towards him, till he heard sufficient to be quite convinced that he was not mistaken, and slackening even the quiet walk of his horse, he turned it on to the grass again, so that no sound of its footsteps should create alarm in the minds of those who were approaching.

The road from Shepherd's Bush, then a wild desolate place, to Southall

was indeed so celebrated for the daring deeds of highwaymen, that it was no uncommon thing for people to turn back instead of crossing Ealing Common, if there was any reason to suppose there was one of those night adventurers upon it, and hence it was that our hero did not think proper to give any premature notice of his presence to those whom he wished to attack.

And now about a quarter of a mile from him, he saw two faint star-like lights, and he knew them to be the carriage lamps, so that he had now a capital guide to the approach of the vehicle, and was able to take his station in the part of the road which he might think the best adapted for his purpose.

There was a hollow of about fifty feet in length, and it was in the lowest part of that where the highwayman took his station, there being behind him a clump of fir trees, which effectually hindered his figure from being seen against the night sky. Moreover, those trees, tempered the wind considerably, so that the spot on which he fully intended to stop the carriage, was on that night the calmest upon the whole common, as well as, in consequence of its lying so low, the heaviest bit of road for the tired horses to struggle through, and so one at which they could be most readily stopped.

But it is time that we should take a peep into the travelling carriage, and see who they are that are so likely to be stopped.

CHAPTER V.

THE travelling carriage which was doomed to come to an abrupt stand still upon Ealing Common, had emblazoned upon its panels, the arms of one of the most ancient Oxfordshire families, and it contained personages so different in mind and manners, that even if it were not intimately connected with our story, it would be not a little curious to peep into it, and see how they behaved themselves individually towards each other.

It was one of the old fashioned roomy family coaches, that held six people without any inconvenience to speak of, and was drawn by two fat lazy horses, who never condescended to get out of a quiet walk of about five miles an hour, which was thought really very good work indeed, the more especially as the roads were but indifferent. On this occasion, however, there was a light road, for but four persons occupied the interior of the carriage.

One of them was an elderly lady, who seemed absorbed in painful reflections, for every now and then she shook her head, and gave utterance to a deep sigh. Then there was sitting next to her a young lady, who held the old lady by the hand, and who in a whisper would at intervals say something to her, which was intended to be cheering. On the opposite seat, crammed into one corner, was a younger lady, and all her efforts seemed to be to get as far as possible from a man who was on the seat beside her, and who was about one of the finest specimens of the "gent" of the period, that could probably have been found.

His coat was sky-blue, and had cloth enough around its skirts to make another of ample dimensions. His ruffles descended to the tips of his fingers. His hat diminished at the top to a ridiculously small circumference, and he held in both hands a riding whip, with the silver end of which he patted his mouth with great complaisance.

"Well, cousin Cicely," he said, "you don't seem the worse for your journey as yet, at any rate, do you now?"

This speech was evidently intended to procure a reply from the young lady, who held the hand of her elder companion, but it failed in that object, for the only notice taken of it consisted in a slight—a very slight inclination of the head from her.

"Well," he added, after another pause. "You may as well speak, I'm sure."

"What would you have her say?" inquired the old lady tremulously.
 "You cannot expect that we should feel very happy?"

"Hem! Well I don't know that."

"What! Are we now destitute?"

"Oh, no, no; I—that is you can look to me, you know. I used always to be counted a generous sort of fellow. The fact is, you take to heart the loss of the little property at Guilford, but it can't be helped, you know. You came into possession, all of you, because it was thought I was drowned on the river, but Lord bless you, I wasn't drowned at all. The fact is, I was picked up insensible by a Dutch smuggler and carried to Holland, that I was. He! he! he! Well, you must know I had no money, and——"

"You have told us all this before," said the old lady.

"Well, I was only saying—he! he! he!—Tom Brereton is like a cat, he always lights upon his legs—everybody says that. Well, you see, a fat little Dutch girl fell in love with me, so I borrowed some money of her, and bilked her. He! he! he! Then I came to England and found my old governor dead, and as I was supposed to be drowned, you and your family had walked from a couple of attics, in Boomsbury, into the little Guilford property. Your son, too, must, to put himself forward in the army, borrow £100 on it. Lord! how you all stared when you saw me. Well, you ask me to come to London with you, to go to your friend Hammerton, the lawyer, and talk about it. Yes, says I—talk away. He! he! he! and here I am. This is my carriage, you know, properly speaking, though you do ride on the best seat.

"We will resign it to you," said the young girl.

"Oh, no, no—never mind me—I only just mentioned it, that's all."

"You may be the son of my poor brother, whom I call poor, because he was uncharitable," said the old lady, "or you may not; for as you know very well, if you be the person you represent yourself to be, I have not seen you since you were a child.

"If I be? Well, come, that is good. But the lawyer will soon put that to rights, and as for not seeing you and your family, the old governor, who has gone to glory I suppose, used to say, 'Tom, always keep out of the way of your poor relations. They will borrow your legs else, and leave you nothing but stumps to walk upon. He! he! he! Good that was.'

"And kind," said the younger girl, who sat on the same seat with him, and who now in a tone of bitter sarcasm, pronounced these two words.

"Well, miss pert," said Tom Brereton, "I don't see that you have any right to meddle with it. You are only ——"

"My friend," interrupted the young lady opposite, "and as such entitled to respect."

"Respect a fiddlestick! Upon my life, for people going out of their property you are about as confounded a set of stuck up folks as ever I heard of. I suppose your son, Markham, old lady, has got to London by this time, eh?"

"I don't know, sir," said the old lady.

"Oh, don't you, ma'am. Well, I can't say I see why you should all of you be in such a way. You were poor before, and you will only be poor again, you know. I dare say you thought it an uncommonly nice thing to drop into £250 a year, but after all you can go back to the two attics in Bloomsbury, you know, and try and get some sort of work to do so as to pay me off by degrees what you have already spent of mine. He, he, he! I think I ought to have rent for the house too, so long as you have been in it; upon my life I do."

"Can it be possible?"

"Rather."

"Alas, alas! and this is the amount of mercy I am to expect from my brother's son. Young man, we have told you candidly that we are now going to call upon a lawyer to ask him what you can demand, and what you cannot."

"Oh, I know that, but you need not all of you be in such a pet with me. If you had been civil, you need not have given yourself half the trouble. You were not over inclined to give me even a seat in the coach, though I did ask for it. He, he, he! my own coach, too. And why you should all be offended just because I told Cicely she was pretty, and gave her the least tickle in the world, I don't know."

"If I were to inform my son, sir, of your conduct," said the old lady, "I would not answer for your safety one moment afterwards. I wish he had remained with us, but one reason why he did not was that the road is so infested with highwaymen he wanted to ride on till we were quite among the houses, to clear the way."

"Highwaymen! Bless my heart, you don't think there's any danger, do you? I've got £20 in my pocket, besides all my papers to prove who I am. Bless me. I—I don't feel comfortable at the idea of a highwayman, at all, somehow. I like my money."

"No doubt of it," said the girl on the seat with him.

"Of course I do, but I like my life better, and had rather, of course, like any reasonable man, pay something any day than be in any danger."

"So I should think."

"Ah, to be sure, you are after all a more sensible girl than I thought you. Now I tell you what we will do if a highwayman should stop us. I'll slip down among the straw, and you can all of you say there are no persons but women here, and beg him to let you go."

"I should rather be inclined," said Cicely, "to direct attention to you, as bearing the semblance of a man, in order to protect our riches."

"No, no. You wouldn't do that now. How uncommonly unfriendly. Where are we now I wonder. Hoi, hoi! postillion, where are we now?"

"Ealing Common, sir."

"Just look out, and if you see a gentleman on a black horse, ask him to ride close to the window and not leave us, will you, and I'll give you a shill—I mean sixpence when we get to town, look sharp out now. God bless me, Ealing Common. Why there have been more robberies on Ealing Common lately than everywhere else put together. They say Sixteen-string Jack comes on this road sometimes, along with Claude Duval."

A slight start and exclamation from the young girl at his side, attracted the attention not only of Tom Brereton, but of the other ladies as well.

"What alarms you," said Cicely, and then darting a glance at her contemptible cousin, Tom Brereton, she added, "pray sir, keep your fears to yourself. We do not share them, and therefore cannot feel in any way interested in them. If we should be attacked by a highwayman, he will perhaps for a moment fancy we have a man to protect us, but he will soon find out his error."

"Ah," said Tom, without showing much discomposure at the utterance of this remark, "I should not wonder now, but you think you will put me quite in a pet by what you say, but, he, he, he! it won't do, I assure you. Oh, dear, no; and besides every inch that we get nearer town, there is less chance of a highwayman, and I of course am the more comfortable."

"You cannot surely, sir," said the old lady, breaking silence, "mean that you have any serious intention of considering my son Markham as indebted to you for the use he has mistakenly made of the little property he thought belonged to us?"

"Why, as to that ma'am—aunt I suppose I ought to call you—as to that I —"

What sort of reply Mr. Tom Brereton was about to give to the remark of his aunt, is most unfortunately lost to posterity, for at the moment he had got so far in his speech, the carriage came to an abrupt halt, and a loud clear voice from the road side cried:

"Move another pace, postillion, and I will try the temper of your skull with a couple of slugs."

"Murder!" groaned Tom Brereton, as according to his former expressed view of expediency in such a contingency, he slipped off his seat down among the straw at the bottom of the carriage. "Murder! There is a highwayman at last."

CHAPTER VI.

A SLIGHT cry of terror was all that came from the old lady, and Cicely, flinging her arms round her mother, said with extraordinary courage:

"Be not alarmed, no man will wantonly injure us. I have heard that these highwaymen some of them have chivalric notions of honor where females are concerned."

"Oh don't mention me to him whatever you do," whined Tom Brereton. "Only think of my £20, my papers, and perhaps my life. Have mercy upon me. Confound the seat, I can't get under it. Miss Cicely—cousin Cicely, recollect we are cousins you know. Oh Lord, here he comes."

The side lamps of the carriage sent a halo of light around the vehicle, and by its assistance the occupants of the vehicle could see a man's face at one of the windows, which he rather dexterously let down from without, and then in the softest and most winning accents, as he laid his hand upon the panel of the door, he said:

"Be not alarmed, ladies, I beg. I am aware that there is an invalid here, and will do my spiriting gently. I have the honor to request your purses and watches."

"Spare our lives," said the old lady.

"Lives! Oh, madam, can you fancy that I am a ruffian? I was misinformed, for a young gentleman with whom I had the honor of a little conversation on the road, informed me that a man was of your party. You seem, however, to be alone, but do not let that circumstance alarm you. Unprotected females are the care of every gentleman."

"Will you permit us to pass, sir," said Cicely.

"Certainly, miss, will I, after the little ceremony of exacting a slight tribute, since you are travelling over my territory. All monarchs must have supplies, you know, however much in this case I regret to see a shadow of alarm upon so lovely a face."

Cicely drew back as this compliment was uttered, for in her eagerness to endeavor to persuade the highwayman to allow them immediately to pursue their journey, she had brought one of the sweetest countenances the world ever saw, within the sphere of the lamp light, so that the highwayman caught a full sight of it, and he never forgot it.

"Take this," said the young girl, who had not yet spoken, as she handed a small silk purse to the robber. "Take this—look at it at your leisure, but leave us now."

"Who's that?" he cried. Eh! Who spoke?"

As he uttered this hurried query, he looked more curiously into the carriage, the result of which was, that he saw the back of Mr. Tom Brereton's sky-blue coat. Hilloa! what have we here?" he added. "Any skulking, eh?"

With the butt end of a large holster pistol, he dealt the hidden youth so serious a blow, that he rose with a howl of pain, crying,—

"Oh Lord—oh Lord! Oh my back! Have mercy upon me, good Mr. Highwayman, I'm only an unfortunate young man, who has nothing to give you. If you please, sir, to let me go this time, I'll take care the next time I meet you, to have a few pounds about me."

"Why, what poltroon is this?" cried the robber. "Come out, sir. Come out on to the common, and let me have a good look at you, that I may know

a coward when I see one again. This fellow, ladies, is a disgrace to your society. Come out."

"Oh dear me. Now, cousin Cicely, and you, aunt, and you, miss what's your name, do say something for me, or I shall be murdered, I know. Oh dear—oh dear. Why did I come myself instead of sending somebody else on this errand?"

"Will you come out?"

"Don't insist upon it, I beg sir, and I'll give you £10 down, upon my life I will."

"Be still, my Sue!" said the highwayman to his horse, and then immediately dismounting, he opened the door of the carriage, and seizing Mr. Tom Brereton by the collar, dragged him at once into the road, where that valorous individual fell upon his knees in the mud, and roared for mercy."

"Your money or your life!"

"Oh yes, of course, sir. You will be paid. In this pocket book is my money, I'll get it out, sir, in a moment. Thank you, sir, I'm very much obliged, indeed."

"There's no occasion for so much trouble," said the highwayman, as he twitched the pocket book from the trembling hand of Tom. "I can take it out myself at my leisure."

"But sir—good, kind, sir. There's all my papers there to prove who I am."

"Never mind, you are sure to gain by the exchange if you are taken for some one else. Ladies have you any more money than what I have received?"

"We have but a small sum," said Cicely, "and God knows how sadly we want it."

"It is rather strange," replied the highwayman, "that ladies travelling in their own carriage should only have a small sum, and want that so sadly; but if you will tell me upon your honor, that such is the case, I will take your word."

"Upon my honor it is so," said Cicely."

"That is sufficient, I have the honor, ladies, to wish you good night."

Cicely's hand was upon the edge of the door, and before she could be aware of what he was about, the highwayman had raised it audaciously to his lips, and kissed it, adding in a soft and winning tone—

"Believe that there are worse folks on the road of life, who pass along unsuspected, than Claude Duval."

"Claude Duval! Then you are the celebraed highwayman, who for the last year has filled report with his exploits, and—and—who——"

"Who never forgot that he was a gentleman in the presence of ladies," added the highwayman. "I have the honor to wish you good night. You may pursue your journey in peace, but should you be stopped at Shepherd's Bush, just say that Sue and her master has bidden you good night, and you will be allowed to pass unmolested."

With these words, the highwayman left the astonished travelling party, and springing upon the back of his horse, was in a moment lost in the gloom that was beyond the little circle of light cast by the side lamps of the carriage. Mr. Tom was still in the mud, hardly able to believe that after all he had really escaped with his life, from what he considered the most terrible danger he had ever been in, in all his career.

It was the postillion who first broke the silence that now ensued, and he did so by saying, in the most dolorous accents—

"What shall I do, ladies? Shall I go on? It was no fault of mine, you know?"

"Yes, yes," cried Cicely, "go on as quickly as you can."

"No, no," shouted Tom Brereton. "Stop a bit—stop a bit. Don't go without me, you forget that I was pulled out of the coach. Stop I say, don't be going on in that sort of way. Hilloa! I'm all over mud. Come, come, a joke's a joke, but this ain't one."

The postillion was glad to get on, and in fact before Tom had began to call out in this way, for being left behind, the vehicle had already moved on a short distance, so that the terrified and bewildered postillion fully imagined that the shouting arose from other highwaymen or perhaps the same, who might have come back, fancying that he had not got enough out of the party. The consequence of this was, that instead of stopping, he started the horses on at increased speed, and after a further attempt to hold on by the back of the carriage, Tom was left sprawling in the dirt.

Cicely knew very well that such a catastrophe had occurred, but she did not under the circumstances think there was any very urgent necessity for taking any steps to rectify it, and in a few minutes Tom was out of ear-shot. As for the old lady, she was in such a state of fright, that she scarcely knew what had happened, while the younger girl, who had given the small purse to Claude Duval, uttered not a word.

Once Cicely thought she heard her weeping.

"Do not be alarmed, May," she said. "All is over now."

The young girl who was thus called May, started and spoke in a timid voice—

"Oh yes, it is all over. Thank God it is all over, and he has taken nothing from any of you. Oh, most of all, I am deeply thankful for that. That is indeed a mercy."

"Nay, he could take but little from us, May, seeing that we have so little to lose; and certainly for a highwayman he was about as polite as any one could possibly with any reason expect. I am most anxious about my brother, Markham, and fear that some evil has befallen him on the road. You are weeping again, May."

"I am deeply affected."

"Nay, my dear May, you should not allow a little circumstance like this so to affect your nerves—all is over now."

"Can I be otherwise than affected?" said the girl, "when those are exposed to danger who gave me food and shelter in my state of destitution. Was I not a wanderer without a home in the streets of London, when you and your dear, kind mother met me and took me home with you?"

"Yes, but the candid manner in which you told us you were an orphan, and your name was May Russel, convinced us that we were right in thinking well of you, and your whole conduct has confirmed the thought."

"Yes, yes, I told you my name was May Russel, God will reward you."

"Say no more, May. That is a subject upon which you know I exacted, some time since, a promise that you would not speak, I know all that you would say, and therefore exacted such a promise. Let me beg of you to keep it, but, be assured, that let our condition be what it may, and our means ever so much reduced, you shall share with us what we have."

What reply the young girl would have made to this generous speech cannot be told, for at the moment she was about to open her lips to speak, the carriage stopped, and the postillion in a voice of terror, shouted,—

"Oh, Lord! here's another of 'em; I shall have them slugs in my nob yet, afore we gets to Tyburn Gate. Here's another! Here's another!"

A horseman galloped up to the carriage, and in a clear voice, said,—

"Ladies have you been stopped by a highwayman to-night, for I have?"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely. "Yes."

"Probably then a little bead purse that I took from him, belongs to one of you."

"Took from him!" cried the young girl who had been called May. "Have you—you killed him?"

"Oh, no. We had a little encounter, and I gained the victory, after which he said to me, 'I regret that I took from a young lady in a travelling carriage a little bead purse, with a small sum of money in it. Will you restore it for me as you are on the road, and are likely to see them?' Upon which I took it, and here it is. There are some very bad characters high up the road, by

Shepherd's Bush, so if you please I will ride by the side of your carriage and escort you; I am well armed."

"Pray, sir, who are you?" said Cicely.

"I am an officer in the army, madam, but you see me in plain clothes, as I am at present what we call unattached."

The old lady had heard something of this colloquy, and at once proposed her thanks for the offer of the officer's protection to town, and after she had said that, Cicely did not very well know how to say anything to the contrary, although from the conduct of Claude Duval, she had no fear of a second attack from him, and moreover, he had given her a pass-word against other depredators, in the efficacy of which she somehow or another placed implicit reliance, although coming from so suspicious a quarter as it did.

The officer took now for granted that he had full power to consider himself the escort of the ladies, for he ordered the postillion to go on at an easy pace, and with his hand resting upon the window sill of the carriage, he accommodated his horse's steps to those in the vehicle, and so was able to converse.

"And so you have been stopped," he said, "by the celebrated—perhaps I ought to say notorious Claude Duval?"

"Yes," said Cicely. "He told us that was his name."

"And of course then you met with much politeness. He is well known to be specially gallant to women—nay I have been credibly informed in London, that some ladies who have been quite enchanted with the anecdotes told of the youthful, gallant highwayman, have actually gone to Ealing Common for the sake of the chance of being stopped by him, and so achieving an interview with so celebrated a personage."

"Can it be possible?" said Cicely.

"Of my own knowledge, I cannot of course say, but I have heard as much."

"'Tis strange indeed," said Cicely. "We on the contrary were in much alarm."

"You should not travel on such roads as this, unattended by a gentleman, permit me to say."

Cicely was about to make some remark about Tom Brereton, but she upon a second thought, corrected herself, and said nothing in reply to the officer, who, after a pause continued—

"It is perhaps not quite correct of me as a stranger, to press my services upon you, but there is a frankness in your nature which will excuse me when I say, that I should esteem it a high honor to be of service to you in London in any way. Pray pardon me for saying so much, if you should think it in the least impertinent."

"Nothing is impertinent that is meant to be kind," said Cicely, "but we—must decline making any acquaintance at present, sir."

"I bow to your decision," said the officer, "and as you will be soon in safety, I will leave you, merely remarking that I shall never forget this night."

"Indeed, sir!" said Cicely, in the most innocent manner in the world, for she was not sufficiently used to flattery to suspect that the stranger was only paving the way to the utterance of some well-turned compliment to her.

"Yes," he continued, "I shall cherish the remembrance of this brief conversation as one of the happiest moments of my life; I shall never forget tones that to my perception carry the sweetest music that my ears ever drank in with delight."

Cicely was silent—she felt hurt at this sudden freedom of the stranger's manner, and yet she did not know very well how to rebuke it, and he, probably fancying from her silence that he had a sort of license to go on, added—

"We may never meet again, but be assured, that not the most vivid scenes of a chequered existence can ever obliterate an image that now lies enshrined in my heart."

At this moment a troop of about eight horsemen came along the road from London, and the foremost of them called out to the officer—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but have you come far up the road with your friends in the coach?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, have you had a tussle, with any highwayman? We have come out to see if we can capture the celebrated Claude Duval. Our horses are good, and so is our will."

"It's a great pity you should be disappointed then, gentlemen, of a little sport. Ladies, I have the honor of bidding you good night. Gentlemen, I am Claude Duval, and this is my horse Sue. Have you a mind for a canter to Wormwood Scrubs? If so come on and the devil take the hindmost!"

CHAPTER VII.

For a few moments, as might well be supposed, the horsemen who had so frankly announced their intention of capturing the highwayman, if they could, were so perfectly astounded at the cool assurance of the object of their attack, that he had got a considerable start before they could among them settle the question of pursuit or no pursuit.

One of the party, however, who was apt to be more prompt in his proceedings than the others, cried in a loud voice as he spurred his horse—

"Forward! Do you want to be the laughing stock of all London?"

In most critical circumstances there requires but some one to give an impulse, and in this case, as it does in almost all cases, it fully succeeded, for one and all dashed after him who had spoken, at the greatest speed their steeds could compass.

But if the horsemen were astonished at finding the gentlemanly looking man, whose occupation appeared to be that of escorting some ladies into town, turn out to be the celebrated Claude Duval, how much greater was the bewilderment and surprise of Cicely Brereton and her mother? They were recalled, however to a consciousness of the necessity of immediately proceeding, by the violent weeping of May, who sobbed with such a convulsive energy that Cicely could not imagine how the occasion should be deemed sufficient to call forth such a gush of feeling, for, after all, singular as the adventure was, Cicely could find nothing affecting in it.

"My dear May," she said, "you have commonly so bold and firm a demeanor that I am surprised and grieved to find you thus afflicted."

"Then do not speak to me," said the young girl. "Do not speak to me just now, Miss Cicely, at another time perhaps I can tell you, but I implore you to ask me nothing."

This appeal, uttered in almost frantic accents, was more puzzling still, and it was something of a relief when the postillion cried out—

"Shall I drive on? I thought it was him, for I see a bit of a red coat peeping out from the top cloak he had on. Oh, I thought it was him, all the while, but I dar'n't say nothing or he'd pretty soon have settled me. Shall I go on now?"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely, "and as quickly as you can."

The carriage rattled onwards, but, as it will be far more interesting for us to follow our acquaintance Claude Duval down the western road, we will leave the ladies Brereton to take their way unmolested into London, and once more place ourselves upon the track of the highwayman.

Although Claude, with his usual daring recklessness had, as we have seen, invited a pursuit, he yet seemed to be doubtful if the challenge would, under

the circumstances be accepted by the horsemen, and as he was by no means inclined to be so absurd as to take a long gallop with no object, he reined in his horse, after going half a mile, and paused to listen.

All was still around him. It seemed as if at that moment the very genius of silence had taken up its abode upon that spot of earth, and this solemn repose of nature would have had an effect upon the warm and not unsuperstitious mind of Duval, had he not been much more intensely occupied by listening for any sound indicative of pursuit.

And it soon came. He heard the heavy tread of horses' hoofs in full gallop.

"Ah, my Sue!" he said, patting the neck of the beautiful animal he rode. "We shall be put upon our mettle. You must show them what blood can do with a light weight; and we must have no incumbrances, my lass."

As he spoke, he undid a clasp which held the cloak around his neck, that had so effectually disguised him from the recognition of the ladies in the carriage, and slung the garment over the front of his saddle. He then shifted his hat round about, for he had changed it likewise for disguise, the hind part before, and then, with a low chirping whistle he urged the horse forward, and off she went like the wind.

"My darling Sue!" he muttered, "we could beat them on a fifty mile chase, but why should we trouble ourselves so to do. We will bid them good-bye shortly, and if we can send them on a wild goose canter, we will."

Again he held his head aside to listen, and his practised ear told him how much he gained upon his pursuers, and how easy a thing it would be to distance them completely, and then take a route across the country, instead of by the high road, and so baffle them all—but as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, he heard a horse approaching from the other direction at a sharp canter, which would soon bring its rider face to face with him. This was not exactly what he wished, and yet it did not follow that the approaching horseman would take any notice of him, so he rode on, but at less speed, for he did not wish to seem to be a fugitive.

"Hold!" cried the horseman, as he came nearly up to Duval. "Hold whoever you are, and answer me a question."

"What question?" said Duval, reining in Sue so suddenly, that she reared, and would have thrown a less practised rider.

"Is your horse fresh?"

"As a daisy in April."

"Then you must exchange with me, I'm a king's messenger, and my horse is tired; I can convince you I am what I say I am by showing you the badge of my office, a silver hound. Come, dismount at once, or I must enforce my demand. If you attempt to escape, I shall send a pistol shot after you."

The king's messenger, for such he really was, spoke in such a tone of decided and firm authority, that would have awed many a man into compliance with his wishes, especially as it was well known that ample remuneration was always given in such cases, but if ever a bold man met his match, the messenger had when he encountered Claude Duval.

"It's very kind of you," said Claude, as the messenger flung himself off his horse, and came towards him with the bridle in his hand, "to tell me who you are, and I cannot think of being otherwise than equally candid."

"Pho! pho! dismount, sir."

"I am, Claude Duval, the highwayman."

"The devil!"

"No, only one of his messengers. Good night."

As he uttered these words, Claude twitched the bridle of the messenger's horse out of his hand, and giving the rein to Sue, he was off with the other steed dashing on by his side, at the full stretch of the bridle which he held it by. This transaction had occupied far less space in the enacting than in the telling, and the galled and bewildered messenger found himself in the middle of the road, nearly five miles from London, and without a horse at all, in

addition to which his own horse when it plunged off, in obedience to the impulse given it by Claude Duval's, had saluted its former master with a kick, which, although not very serious, made him glad to sit down on the side of the road, feeling a little sick and uncomfortable.

In another moment the troop of horsemen in pursuit of Duval, swept past him at full speed, paying no attention to the cry he raised for aid.

On dashed Claude, and the horse without a rider, being relieved from its load, kept up the speed well which Sue enforced; but yet amused, as he was by this little extra adventure, Claude began to think he had better get rid of his captured steed, and he was upon the point of casting the bridle from him, when he heard a voice cry,—

"Murder! Murder! Will no Christian help me. Oh murder! murder I'm all alone, I've been robbed by a highwayman. My name's Tom Brereton—murder! Help! Help!"

This was the very spot at which he, Duval, had first stopped the carriage and he at once knew the person who called so energetically for assistance, was the young man whom he dragged out of the vehicle by the collar. His fertile imagination and love of frolic at once suggested to him a plan of baffling his pursuers without fatiguing Sue, which he immediately resolved to put into practice.

"Oh sir," he cried, "have you been robbed by a highwayman?"

"Yes, yes. Oh dear; yes, and ill-treated too."

"Well, I can tell you that there is on this road to-night, a regular gang of highwaymen, who are determined to rob and murder everybody they meet. This is my master's horse I am leading, mount it, and gallop on, keeping the high road, mind, till you meet a party of dragoons who are coming from Brentford, and then you will be safe, but if you or I remain longer here our throats will be cut."

"Oh, indeed, you don't say so."

"Indeed I do though. Come, quick, mount. I'll help you. Hold on any way, by his ears and his mane, for if you fall off you are lost. There take this cloak round you—I'll clasp it—no thanks—all's right. Don't leave the high road. Good God, I hear them coming! Don't say a word, of course, we ought all to help each other at a pinch."

"Oh, dear—oh, dear, I can't ride."

"Hold on, anyhow, I tell you, and fancy all the while you feel a knife sawing away at your throat."

"Gracious goodness. Murder!"

Claude Duval gave the horse a slashing blow with a riding whip, and off it went, nearly maddened by pain and excitement, carrying Tom Brereton at a most respectable pace, while the cloak that was clasped round his neck floated behind him like some victorious banner.

"Now, my Sue," said Duval, and springing into the saddle again, he turned the creature's head towards a hedge by the road side, which Sue, fully understanding what was required now of her, cleared beautifully, alighting softly in a meadow on the opposite side, when Claude again immediately dismounted.

"Down, girl, down," he said, and the horse crouched to its knees, and then lay upon its side as quiet as possible, while Claude crouched likewise to the ground, for there was behind them a patch of light colored sky against which he and the horse might perchance have been seen. It was well that not a moment had been lost, for scarcely had these precautions for concealment been taken when the pursuing party came up and actually paused a moment on that spot.

"He has taken to the meadows, I think," said one.

"No, no," shouted he who was heading the pursuit. "I saw his cloak fluttering behind him on the brow of the hill there, just as you get into Acton, by Berrymead Priory. Come on. Come, we shall have him yet. Come on."

Away they went again, and were soon lost to sound as well as to sight.

"So you think you will have him, do you," laughed Claude Duval. "No, no. My time has not come yet. Well, well, I have not had much luck to-night, so I will to London, and look over this pocket-book of that cowardly fellow, who, I suppose will not stop until his horse falls with him. I can't yet get that girl Cicely out of my head. How came May with them?"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN Gate-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, there was a public house called the "Old Moon." It has been long swept away, and nothing even to indicate the site of it now remains. At the period of our story, however, it was in a flourishing condition, and was kept by a man whom no one ever knew by any other name than that of Anthony. He was a tall, lank, straight-haired, methodistical looking fellow, was Anthony, and he had a way of turning up his eyes, and uttering pious ejaculations, as if he were the most religious person in the whole neighborhood; and truly, if attending a meeting house in little Queen-street, and being about as hypocritical a rascal as ever stepped, gave him any claims to that character, he certainly fulfilled it.

At two o'clock on the morning preceding the night, some of the particulars of which we have brought before the reader, Anthony sat dozing in his bar. To be sure, his house was shut to all appearances, but at its back there was a long, low-roofed room, to which there was an entrance by the flap of a cellar down a stable yard, and there Anthony had still some customers, although the hour was rather a late, or rather we ought perhaps to say, an early one.

These customers of Anthony's were of a peculiar description, for at one end of the long room sat a man behind a kind of counter, and almost everybody who came into the room, went up to him and placed some article before him, at which he invariably shook his head in disapproval and contempt, and then handed out some money, often accompanied by a declaration to the effect that he was ruining himself by degrees—always by degrees.

The articles so bought were then placed in a basket projecting from the wall behind him, and whenever he had a small lot collected, he gave some sort of a signal, and the basket disappeared, being connected with a turnabout similar to what may be seen at many convent gates on the Continent, after which it was sent back again empty by the same means.

At the other entrance to the room two men and two dogs kept watch and ward, and no one was permitted to enter who was unknown to one or the other of the men, so that the place was pretty well guarded from intrusion.

"I shall be ruined by degrees," said the man at the counter; "what do you mean by this?"

The question was addressed to a mere lad, who had laid before him a bunch of gold seals attached to a piece of watch chain.

"I don't know," laughed the lad. "I made a grab at a ticker, and that was all I got, besides a hue-and-cry through the Dials."

"It's an insult—I shall be ruined—by degrees. There's five shillings for you, be off. Ah, Poll, is that you? bless your pretty eyes, if I were not ruined now—by degrees, you should have a glass of the best wine in Anthony's cellar."

"Yes," said a young girl, attired in flaunting apparel, "by degrees I suppose. Where's Claude to-night?"

"Ah, my dear, that's what I have been asking, but business has fallen off dreadfully. We have very few gentlemen of the road come here now. Why I have known the time when Sixteen-string Jack would bring me in twelve

or fourteen watches of a night, and a half pint measure full of rings, brooches, and shoe-buckles, and now ——”

“He is in Newgate, where we shall all go in time.”

“Ahem! by degrees. He is in Newgate.”

“Yes, and he will go to Tyburn to-morrow.”

“By degrees, I suppose, he will. Upon my life it’s a pity—a great pity, when you come to think of it—by degrees, don’t you think it is, Poll?”

“Don’t bother! I want to see Claude. Don’t you know he promised Jack that he would meet him on his road to Tyburn, and shake hands with him, in spite of all the officers.”

“Why a—y—s—by degrees.”

“Well, I’ve seen Jack, and he tells me that there will be such an attempt to take Claude if he shows himself to-morrow, that he had better not do so. Jack says he’ll excuse him, and begs me to ask him, in the name of their old friendship, not to try it. I thought to have found him here. I’ll go and speak to Anthony, perhaps he knows where he is. They say that six officers to-morrow are to share £200 among them if they take Claude.”

The girl seemed well acquainted with the place, for after this brief dialogue with the man at the counter, she opened a door at one corner of the room, which disclosed a small flight of dark stairs; but while she is seeking Anthony, we will attend to something of rather an interesting nature which is going on just outside the entrance to the stable-yard from whence opened the cellar entrance of the “Old Moon.”

Two men were standing in the deep shadow of a small door-way opening into one of the stables which happened to be untenanted, and they were conversing in whispers.

“It was all very well,” said one of them, “to draw lots in the governor’s house at Newgate, as to which six of the lot of us should take Claude Duval to-morrow, if he ventures upon coming to shake hands with Sixteen-string Jack, and share the £200 among them; but as we were not lucky enough to belong to this lot, it aint so pleasant to see one’s £30 a-piece go by us, is it now?”

“Sartinly not, but what a do it will be if he grabs him to-night, won’t it?”

“Rather, I should say. Do you think the girl Lucy’s information is to be depended on, that he gets here at half past two or so, and sleeps till next evening?”

“Yes I do. Claude has neglected her, and a spiteful woman, you know, will do anything.”

“Very good, now you know how we are to do. If he comes, I am to get behind him and fling my arms round him, while you, under threat of blowing his brains out, pop on the darbies.”

“All’s right. I don’t see the trouble of taking him. He’s only one after all. It’s people giving him an advantage by being afraid, that does the business.”

“Yes, that’s it. Well, you remain where you are, and I’ll get on the other side of the gateway. Don’t you move till you see my arms round him, and now as we are in a queer neighborhood, the less we say the better.”

While this conversation was taking place, a figure, muffled up very much about the face, came at a rapid pace down Queen-street; and just as it was about to cross towards Gate-street, a girl rushed out of a doorway and flung herself at its feet.

“Claude, Claude!” she said; “is it you, Claude?”

“Lucy, my girl!” said Claude Duval—for it was indeed he—“what ails you?”

“Kill me—oh, kill me, Claude; you ought to kill me.”

“I kill you, Lucy? Why, are you dreaming, or have you taken leave of your senses?”

“I don’t know, Claude; but you—you neglected me, and I thought you

no longer loved me—I—I have betrayed you! Now kill me, Claude, and I shall die happy; but don't go to the 'Old Moon' to-night."

"This from you, Lucy!—from my own girl, whom I have always loved! If I have not come near you much of late, it was only owing to poor Jack's troubles. I was getting money and friends for him, and yet it appears he suffers to-morrow; and you want me to swing at Tyburn, too, Lucy?"

"No, no. Oh, God! Claude, unkind words from you are sharper than knives. Oh, no—no—no. Cut my heart out of my bosom, Claude, and you will see then how I love you!"

"I never doubted it until to-night, Lucy. What have you done that should prevent me going to-night to the 'Old Moon?' Come into this deep doorway and tell me."

"In a fit of madness, Claude—dear Claude, in a moment of despair, and jealousy, and rage, I told an officer named Morgan that you came to the 'Old Moon' about two, dear Claude. Kill me now, and I will not blame you, Claude—Claude, you cannot forgive me."

"Easily, my girl, and the more easily because I know that this will be a lesson to you, and you will never listen to the voice of passion and jealousy again. Come, come, don't cry, Lucy; you have made amends, you see, by warning me in time, so no harm's done. Forget it, my girl—I know this Morgan you mention. He is tolerably harmless."

"Oh, Claude you are too good—generous to me. But where will you go to now?"

"Now? Why, to the 'Old Moon,' to be sure."

"No—no—oh no. Who knows what danger there may be. You must not—shall not."

"Nay, Lucy, your fears run away with you; I do not encounter more danger by going to the 'Old Moon,' than I encounter almost every day of my life; and to tell the truth, I am a little curious to know how Morgan will manage this affair; I will tell you, Lucy, in what my principal safety consists. It is in the cupidity of the officers."

"How, Claude?"

"They wcn't combine to take me, because there would be such a sharing of the reward that each man's portion would not pay him for the danger; so be under no alarm. Go home, and believe your Claude to be as true as ever to you."

"Then you really have not seen another that you love better than your poor Lucy, Claude?"

"Seen another? Where are there such eyes to see?"

The girl smiled, and clung gently to his arm.

"Ah, Claude, when I am with you I forget everything and am happy. It is when I am alone that sad and gloomy thoughts of what I once was rise up like spectres to drive me nearly mad."

"You should laugh them away."

"I cannot, Claude, I cannot. They never come to me when you are with me; I seem then as if I were safe against anything in the world, and so I am. Oh, Claude, you will not go to the 'Old Moon,' to-night?"

"I must, Lucy. Go home, and be quite sure that all will be right. Perhaps I will come to you before the morning yet, for I have something to do for Jack, to-morrow, and have not quite settled in my mind how to do it; so I think you may fairly expect me within a few hours."

"In that hope, Claude, I shall live."

She affected to leave him, but her fear for his safety would not permit her and she followed him at a short distance, so that he was not aware of her presence in the darkness of the ill-lighted street, as he now walked rapidly on towards the "Old Moon;" being, however, quite prepared for any sudden attack that might be made upon him by Morgan the officer.

Of course it was not an attempt upon his life he had to fear, but his liberty, and that consideration it was, doubtless, that gave him a kind of fear-

lessness which, if his destruction had been aimed at, he could not possibly have possessed, for then he would not have known the moment when a pistol shot might put an end to his career. As it was, however, he passed on with an appearance of composure to the gateway leading to the stables, where his two enemies were posted.

He wisely kept in the middle of the entry, and he had passed on some few steps, when according to his plan, which was no bad one, Morgan dashed out and clasped him from behind, round the body, missing the arms, however, which it had been his great object to secure.

"Now, Bill," he cried, "now for the darbies! We have him. It's a hundred pounds a-piece."

"Perhaps a small part of an ounce will do for one of you," said Claude, as snatching a pistol from his belt, he fired it at the open doorway in front of him, where he had just seen the glance of the other officer's eyes as he was preparing to spring out.

A shriek mingled itself with the report of the pistol, and at the same moment, by a dexterous twist of one of his legs, Claude flung the officer who had hold of him, on his back, but he would not loose his hold, and Claude went with him, but uppermost of course, so that while the officer got a blow upon the back of his head on the curb stones, he, Claude, was quite uninjured, and finding that his opponent was knocked insensible, he rose in a moment.

"So, so," he said. "That was the plan, was it? Not a bad one either, Master Morgan, it only wants that one condition of success to be entitled to great praise. Ha! who comes here! Stand, or you die!"

"'Tis I, Claude," said Lucy, "I could not leave you."

"Eh? what's all this?" said old Anthony, the publican, who had been roused by the report of the pistol, and guessed that some of his customers were in trouble. "The Lord look down upon us amen. What's the row—eh—my rummy one?"

"Nothing particular," said Claude.

"Eh? What? Why, is't you, Duval? Let us pray—I mean come in my tulip. Have the grabs been at you? Come along, my daffy-down-dilly, come along."

"No!" said Claude, "I only want to know if you have any news for me, Anthony?"

"Yes, I have: here's Poll has just come from Sixteen-string Jack, and he says you had better leave him alone to-morrow, for the Philistines will be mighty, and are determined, the Lord willing, to have you."

"Oh is that all?"

"Yes, and enough too. But who fired the shot I heard just now?"

"No matter about that. When I am gone, bring out a lantern, and look about you; but tell Poll to say to Jack, when she sees him in the morning, that I'll shake hands with him, according to my promise, come what may of it. I have said it, and Claude Duval never broke his word yet."

"Amen!" said Anthony, "I shall go in to prayers; good night Claude, and luck go with you, for you are as fine a fellow as ever stepped, only I never could awaken you to a proper sense of religion. I'll come out with a lantern and look about, as you say; I suppose somebody is in trouble."

"Not all," said Claude, "somebody's troubles are over probably. Good night. Now, Lucy, if you will give me house room until the morning, I shall be obliged to you, my girl, and you see, as I told you, the danger has recoiled upon the heads of those who got it up for me. It was a chance shot, and no malice in it, so whoever got it ought to blame himself, not me."

"I was so terrified, Claude."

"You always are. You ain't fit for a highwayman's lass, Lucy."

"Don't say that, Claude, for you know I love you, and when you are taken from me, if ever you should be, I will not live long after you; but we will not talk in this way. You must be tired, come come Claude and I will get you

some supper. Oh, how long it is since you have visited me, my brave Claude. I am happy now."

Claude Duval laughed as Lucy ran on talking as she walked by his side; and he from a little pouch that he had, carefully reloaded the small pistol he had discharged at the officer, for it was a favorite weapon, inasmuch, as it had not once missed fire since he had it, and certainly upon this occasion, he owed his liberty and life to it.

"I don't like these adventures, Lucy," he said. "But if they will interfere with me roughly, they must take the consequences."

"Yes Claude, yes. But what did I hear about your shaking hands with Sixteen-string Jack to-morrow. Is he not going to Tyburn?"

"He is. When I was friendless and homeless, Jack was kind to me, and I then said in answer to a remark of his that some day he should swing at Tyburn, that let that day, which I hoped would be far distant, come when it would, I would meet him on the road there, and clasp his hand to mine, and call him my friend."

"But the danger, Claude."

"If it were certain death, I'd do it."

"Claude, Claude!"

"My Lucy, you need not try to dissuade me from this, my word has been passed, and I will keep it. Even you, with all your love, would despise me, if because there was danger to be apprehended, I shrunk from keeping a solemn promise. It must and it shall be done."

"But even Jack himself sent word for you not to do it."

"That makes no difference. Let me beg of you to say no more about it, Lucy. We are good friends now, my girl, and I would fain remain so. The danger is not so great as you think. I will, of course, take all the precautions I can, and in a life like mine, daring has such a charm about it that it saves me from a thousand little risks which would swarm about me. if once they thought I feared."

CHAPTER IX.

A DRIZZLY misty rain fell upon London, and wrapped up the whole city as it were in a dense mantle of damp fog, on the morning after the occurrences we have just related. By daybreak the only difference from the night was, that the wet mist which had before looked black, had a dingy white aspect, through which the few only passengers that were abroad, looked like spectres, being much magnified by the vapor.

Occasionally too, from amidst the halo cast around him by his breath, a horse might be seen snorting and struggling through the misty streets, while the watchmen, with their heads bound round by handkerchiefs, and ensconced in their blankets like great coats, looked out from their boxes, after the night's repose with lack-lustre eyes.

The rain streamed down the front of Newgate, in long black streaks, taking the channels of old streams, and falling with a dull pattering sound, upon the pavement beneath; a sound which amid the stillness of the night, had reached the ears of a man, who was to be hanged at Tyburn at twelve the next day.

This man was Sixteen-string Jack.

He had passed rather a wakeful night, but as he washed his face, the next morning, he whistled an air in a clear and loud key, while he looked at the turnkey, who had brought him the means wherewithal to perform his ab-lutions.

"How do you feel, Jack, this morning," said the turnkey.



"With my hands, I suppose, as I have always done," replied Jack.

"There's a fellow," said the turnkey, calling to another who was outside the condemned cell. "Lor! bless you, he'll die game. He's just made a joke, now, he has."

"And why not?" said Jack, "Life's a joke."

"But is hanging a joke, Jack?"

"Yes, if you have the pluck to laugh at it, certainly."

"Ain't he a rum un?" said the turnkey, in evident intense admiration of Jack's mode of carrying off his certainly rather ticklest position. "We have had a few rum un's here Jack, but you is the *rummestest*. Howsomedever here's the chaplain, Jack."

"Very good."

"Unhappy man," said the chaplain with a pious snuffle, "I hope you have endeavored to make your peace hereafter?"

"All's right," said Jack.

"I trust that you look back with horror on your past life?"

"Horror!" cried Jack. "Oh, dear no."

There's no life like a life on the road,
Hurrah!
There's no life like a life on the road.

You stick to your trade, sir, and let me stick to mine. I am a highwayman! well I know the penalty of being caught and committed, and it has come to that at last. Tyburn tree is waiting for me, but I don't see why I should go out of the world snivelling; its enough to come into it in such a sort of way, when you can't help it. No, sir, I dare say you mean well, but I flatter myself though I am going to be scragged, I ain't much worse than many of my neighbors."

"He's a rum un, aint he, sir?" said the turnkey.

"Silence!" cried the reverend ordinary. "How dare you use the low words 'rum un' to me; I shall have you discharged."

"Do, sir," said Jack. "It will be a Christian like act, that will—mind you don't forget it; and when you are on your last legs, and giving a kick for another breath, may you feel as well as I do now, for I have never yet done a wanton act of cruelty, and I never took a poor man's bread away from him for nothing."

"I perceive," said the chaplain, "that you are obdurate; I tremble to think what will be your fate in the world to come, you hardened sinner."

"Don't be absurd," said Jack. "But it's always the way with you. I never met with anybody who pretended to much religion, who had any temper or charity. What's o'clock?"

"Nearly nine," said the turnkey. "Would you like anything, Jack?"

"Yes, I should. Get us a lot of stewed oysters. They always make me ill in a few hours after taking them, but I shall be dancing on nothing at twelve o'clock, and then it won't matter, and I say—has Poll been again this morning? I want to see her."

"No, Jack, she hasn't been. I knows what you wants to see her for. It's to ask her if she has told Claude Duval not to try to shake hands with you in the cart. You may depend she has ferreted him out, and he's not so mad as to try it on, surely, when he knows that there's £200 issued out agin him."

Jack shook his head.

"I'm afraid," he said, "I'm very much afraid he'll try it. Claude don't look at danger beforehand, and when it comes he stares it out of countenance. If there were £2000 against his name he would not mind. He gave his hand to me upon the promise a year ago, and he'll keep his word. It's the only thing that gives me an uncomfortable feel to-day. They will nab poor Claude as safe as possible; I'm afraid of that, and nothing else."

"Perhaps he won't try it on, after all, Jack."

"I'm afraid he will. But, however, as the old song says, 'What's the use of grieving?' I will hope for the best, if I think the worst. I suppose we shall start soon—what noise is that?"

"The cart, Jack, that's all. There's a thousand people outside Newgate now, and they are pouring in by all the thoroughfares as fast as nothing. I don't think the parson will say much to you, he has gone off in a huff, Jack."

"Let him go—all's right. I wish Poll would come. Where can she be? I suppose they will let her past the gate. It's very odd she aint here, and nine o'clock, too—Who's that coming?"

"Mr. Needles, the sheriff, Jack."

Mr. Needles was the most bandily shaped man that the imagination could picture, for being just about as broad as he was long, he might have been set up in any way without detriment to his appearance, always providing that his sheriff's gown and chain were disposed accordingly. He was very near sighted too, so that when he wished to see anybody, he had to come within an inch of their nose. Mr. Needles was a kind hearted man, and whenever there was an execution, his feelings used to put him into such a state of perspiration that he shone all over his face and round bald head, like a double dip in July. It was his duty now to let the prisoner know that he would soon have to bid this world adieu.

"Ahem!" he said. Mr. a—a—really I don't know your right name—Mr a—a—a."

"Call me Jack, sir, call me Jack. You have done several kind things since I have been here, and I thank you with all my heart."

"Oh don't mention that," said Mr. Needles, getting more shiny than before. "Dear me, I often wish I was not a sheriff, but my time will soon be out, that's one comfort. Well, Jack, since that's what I'm to call you, I have only to say that we start at ten, you know, from here. Bless me, what's that?"

"Something among the crowd outside, sir," said an official. "Hillo! Davis, what's all that shouting for outside?"

"Only a mad bull, sir, among the people," said Davis.

"Poll not come," said Jack. "Poll not come!"

"You won't see her this morning, Jack," said the turnkey. "A man on a *hellephant*, and in armor couldn't get through such a crowd as there is now outside of Newgate, so it's quite out of the question."

"Well," said Jack, with a sigh, "I suppose it can't be helped. Mr. Needles, it won't be fair at all to interfere with Claude Duval to-day, when, if he comes at all to the cart side, it will only be to make an old friend's heart lighter by shaking hands with him, as he goes to death. It will be a dastardly thing to interfere with him then, sir."

"Dear me," said the little fat sheriff, "you know I have no more to do with that than the man in the moon, Jack, I can't help it. It's uncommonly absurd of him to come, if he don't want to be caught."

"It is, but Claude is the man to do it for all that, and glory in it. I'm sorry Poll can't get to tell me if she took him my message. Ah!"

The great bell of Newgate had begun to toll. The sheriff took out an immense handkerchief, and wiped his head and face, which process took some of the shine off it for a time, and then he bustled out of the cell just as a turnkey ran in with some stewed oysters to Jack, according to the request he had made for that article.

It was not any personal fear of his approaching death at Tyburn, that made Jack turn aside, and shake his head at the stewed oysters; but it was his dread, lest Claude Duval should be taken in his chivalrous attempt to shake hands with him, that unmanned him.

"No, no," he said, "I thank you all the same; it was kind of you, and while I live I am not likely to forget it. Good bye, old fellow. You, are among the few that I would have liked to stay among yet awhile, but as it can't be, why it can't, and there's an end of it. I'm wanted, I suppose."

"Yes, Jack. They are waiting to knock your irons off."

"Very good, I'm ready."

A sort of procession escorted Jack to the lobby, where the process of knocking off his irons was adroitly performed, and then, while a strange murmur arose from the crowd, partly of sympathy, partly excitement, the condemned man was placed in the cart that was ready to convey him to the place of execution.

Jack was bare-headed, and his face was pale, while his eyes roved among that sea of faces, as if with intense anxiety, looking for some one whom he wished to recognize. The chaplain got into the cart, and shook his head, in a manner which he intended should be impressive, and strike the crowd with a solemn awe, but the only effect it had, was to elicit an inquiry from one of the nearest spectators if he shook his head because he thought there was anything in it.

This produced a laugh, but that soon passed off as the pale anxious countenance of Sixteen-string Jack and his roving eyes met their gaze.

Just as the cart was about to start, and at least a couple of dozen of persons, who had pressed forward eagerly to offer drink or to shake hands with the culprit, had been thrust back by the officers, the Governor of Newgate stepped up to the cart with an open letter in his hand, and leaning forward to Jack, he said—

"A quaker gentleman, of the name of Luke Houlditch, living at Totten-

ham, and who was robbed on the highway by some one near Finchley, about three months ago has written to say that if you will say if it was you or not, probably it will ward off suspicion from another person who is somewhat suspected. Have you any objection?"

"Surely not, at such a time as this," said the chaplain.

"None in the least," said Jack, "Can't he come and identify me, I can hardly take upon myself, with any certainty, to say yes or no."

"He says he thinks he should know you, but that he dreads a crowd, however he will make an endeavor to see you as you proceed up Oxford street, when he hopes you will satisfy him, and I see no harm in your doing so."

"Be it so," said Jack, "let him come and look at me if he likes. I care for no man's scrutiny now." The governor gave orders that no one should oppose the approach of Mr. Houlditch; he drew back, and the cart started.

As the mournful cavalcade moved slowly down Oxford street, a man dressed in the garb of a quaker was seen sitting on the back of a black horse. The clothing of the horseman was of grey serge of the true quaker's cut, and he wore a broad brimmed, felt hat.

"I tell thee, friends," he said, in a nasal voice, "that I have travelled even from Tottenham High Cross, to see this sinner and man of violence, for have I not suspected my own man Choppings, of waylaying me, and did I not likewise suspect the slaughterer of animals commonly called a butcher, Dobbs, who resideth at Tottenham, likewise of being the culprit, and have I not with the strong arm of the law prosecuted him?"

"What will you take for your hat, friend?" cried a voice in tolerable imitation of the quaker.

"Something of more weight than thy wit, friend," replied the man of peace.

A roar of laughter followed this retort, and another man cried—

"Can't you let the poor fellow go to Tyburn in peace?"

"Yes, friend, truly I do not wish otherwise, but if I recognize in him the son of Belial who robbed me upon the highway, and he confesseth so much upon seeing me, verily you see, I shall cease from suspecting and prosecuting innocent people, but should he say unto me, truly, my friend, Houlditch, I did not rob thee and strike thee upon the nose——"

Another scream of laughter drowned the quaker's voice.

"Yea, and verily, friends," added Mr. Houlditch, "I say unto ye, that my nose swelled exceedingly from the blow stricken thereon.

"Serve you right, too," cried a fellow.

"Thou mayest possibly be right, friend. The only bad thing is that thou art not served right by divers strokes on thy back at the cart's tail, as thou hast more than once already experienced."

It was quite clear that the mob was not a match in wit for the quaker, so no one tried any more attacks upon him. Moreover, the procession was now close at hand, and that concentrated all the interest of the scene.

"Come out, broad-brim," said one. Here's Jack coming."

"Yea and so am I, friend. I only placed myself under this balcony, lest my outward man should get wet by the rain which is even now coming down. I fear that I shall not be able to get to him, as I am a man of peace, and little used to pushing and shouting, verily."

"Make way for the quaker!" cried several. "Make a passage for old broad-brim and no whiskers."

"I thank thee, friend, but if thou hadst no whiskers, thy wife, who is strong in the flesh, could not pull them."

"Confound the fellow," muttered the man. "He has his answers always ready."

The exclamations of the mob, and the odd figure of the quaker on horseback attracted the attention of the officers who were surrounding the cart, and they judged at once that he was the Mr. Houlditch who had been spoken of by the Governor of Newgate, and as he was upon the near side of the way

there was no difficulty in inclining the cart towards the pavement, so that he might ask his questions of Sixteen-string Jack.

The demeanor of Jack now filled every one with surprise, for he betrayed much agitation of manner. His color went and came, and he opened and shut his hands, while he muttered some words to himself, the only one of which that could be caught was "reckless."

The cart was stopped within half a dozen paces of the pavement, and with great difficulty through the throng of people, the quaker made his way on his horse towards it, while Sixteen-string Jack looked eagerly at him.

"Now, sir," cried one of the officers, "ask your questions, and have done with it."

"What a throat thou hast got, friend," said the quaker, "keep thy mouth shut, I pray thee."

"Hoorah! Hoorah!" shouted the crowd, and various expressions indicative of a growing admiration for friend Houlditch were freely uttered, while the officer who had spoken so roughly, bit his lips with vexation.

"And so," said Houlditch, to the condemned man, "thou art 'Sixteen-string Jack?'"

"Yes," said Jack, and his voice faltered, as he spoke, "yes, and it's come to this at last."

"Well, friend, now I look thee in the face, I declare thou didst never wrong me."

"Bravo, bravo!" cried a great blacksmith, who was close at hand. "Bravo! This here quaker is a trump!"

"Give me thy hand Sixteen-string Jack," added Houlditch, "God bless thee, my poor fellow, God bless thee."

"God bless you," said Jack, and tears gushed to his eyes.

"By G—— I suspect," cried a mounted officer, making a grasp at the quaker.

"What?" said Houlditch, as with one blow of the heavy loaded end of his riding whip, he knocked the officer senseless from his horse. "Suspect what, fool? Not more than I am willing to avow."

"He threw off the broad-brimmed hat as he spoke, and Jack cried—

"Fly, fly. Oh, fly."

"Claude Duval!" cried a hundred voices.

"Yes," shouted the sham quaker, in a voice that made itself loudly and clearly heard above all other sounds. "Yes, I am Claude Duval, and I have redeemed my promise, of taking a kind farewell of my old, kind friend, and bidding God bless him."

The officers made a dash at Claude, but the people with a war of determination closed around him, and the great blacksmith shouted—

"Don't let them have him. The bloodhounds! Claude Duval never took a sixpence from a poor man in all his life, though he has given many a one."

"Fly, fly!" again cried Jack. A shower of stones saluted the officers, and the chaplain fell down flat in the bottom of the cart, to get out of the danger of the missiles. Everything seemed to promise that a severe contest between the officers would ensue, and the former drew their staves, but they were greeted by a laugh of derision, and pistols were produced.

"We will have him, dead or alive!" said one.

"Take him then," said Claude. "Farewell Jack. I have kept my word."

"Nobly, nobly," said Jack, "and—and Poll?"

"Shall never want while Claude has a crust to share with her, Jack. Make your mind easy about her. Good bye."

Some of the crowd had pressed Claude's horse on to the pavement, and a lane was made for him, while the officers were so seriously obstructed that they could not move an inch; but two of the horsemen had cutlasses, and they began to use them on the heads of the people so furiously that the mob gave way a little, and unfortunately for Claude, he just arrived opposite the opening of a street, from which a dense mass of people were rushing, to know

what had happened, so that he was completely fixed, while the officers were gradually nearing him.

The corner of the street was a shop of some sort, but it had been closed to avoid danger to the windows, and above the shop was a large balcony in front of the windows of the first floor. Suddenly one of the windows opened, and a girl of great beauty rushed into the balcony.

"Claude, Claude," she cried, "it is Claude. Oh, God, 'tis he."

Claude Duval glared at the window, and the words, "My sister May," escaped his lips. The mob too heard the young girl's exclamation, and the blacksmith shouted—

"Can you take him in at the window, Miss? If you don't he'll swing at Tyburn this day week."

"Yes, yes. Oh yes, anything; Claude, Claude!"

Duval himself saw this was now his only chance of escape, and with surprising agility, he rose in the saddle and stood on the back of the horse, by which he was enabled to clutch the lower rails of the balcony, and in another moment he drew himself up and waving his hand disappeared in at the window of the house, which was put down and the shutters closed immediately. The mob gave three terrific cheers, to express its triumph at the escape of the man, who for the moment, in consequence of a chivalrous act had become its idol.

The victim had escaped, but the confusion was still more serious, and the officers dismounted from their horses, for the purpose of breaking in the door of the house in which Duval had taken refuge; but that turned out to be a foolish proceeding, for being now on foot they were much more on an equality with the mob, and it was only by abandoning the siege of the house that they regained the streets once more.

They held a short consultation among themselves

"What's to be done," cried one, "are we to lose the money?"

"Certainly not. But you see we shall get pulled to pieces by the mob now, if we make any attack upon the house. We must go on to Tyburn now."

"And do you think that such a devil as Claude Duval will wait for us until we get back? That's a likely thing."

"No. I never expected any such thing, but I propose that we go on a little as if we had completely given up all idea of taking him, and then that two of us, with as little observation as possible, detach ourselves from the cavalcade, and go back to watch the house he has taken refuge in, so that if he does go from it, at all events he can be dogged."

"It's the only thing that can be done. Come along."

When the people saw the officers were consulting, and casting angry glances up at the house where Claude had found an asylum, they certainly expected that some immediate and violent attack would be made upon it, but when the procession moved on to Tyburn, and no further notice of the affair was taken, the population raised a great shout of derision, and the blacksmith cried out—

"Three cheers for Claude Duval," which were given most heartily.

We need not pursue the catastrophe at Tyburn, further than to say that Sixteen-string Jack, with all his faults, failings, crimes, and ventures, suffered the dreadful death that had been inflicted on so many—innocent we conscientiously believe as well as guilty—at that fatal spot, which even now when its name is mentioned rings upon the imagination as being redolent of fearful recollections of the past.

The lifeless body hung its hour, and was then removed by two females, who brought a hackney coach to take the sad remains, and their talk, for talk they did even amid their tears as they went away was as much of the chivalrous Claude Duval and his ultimate fate, as of him whom in silence for ever, they had with them as a horrible and ghastly companion.

The officers did not forget their scheme of separating two of their number

from the main body, secretly to watch the house in Oxford Road, where Claude had so very opportunely found shelter, and so intent were the multitude upon the last moments of Sixteen-string Jack, that the manœuvre was executed without exciting observation.

It would, however, have taken more wit and more courage than belonged to all the officers put together, to have circumvented Claude Duval. His time had not yet come, and he was doomed to be the hero of yet more striking adventures than had hitherto fallen to his lot.

We will take a glance at him.

CHAPTER X.

It was indeed no other than poor May Duval, of whom the reader has latterly had but a transient glimpse, who assisted her brother Claude in at the window of the house in the Oxford Road.

For the first time during two years, he felt the pressure of her hand in his, and as the rapidly closed casement and shutters stilled the roar of the multitude without, he could hear the sobs that came from her agonized heart.

All was darkness, however, now in the room, for the shutters were hastily barred by May, and fitting closely as they did, scarcely a ray of daylight found its way to the apartment. How complete—how total was the change from the shout of the multitude without, and the glare of mid-day, to the silence and darkness of that room!

Claude was sensibly affected by it, and his voice shook as he spoke to his sister.

"You have saved me, May," he cried.

"Hush. Oh, hush," she cried. "This way—this way."

She opened a door, and a gleam of light came again into the room. He followed her into an apartment at the back of the house, and then she tried to look at him—she took his hand and tried to speak, but the effort was too great, and bursting into tears, she flung herself upon a couch in an agony of grief.

Claude shook a little, and he paced the room several times before he spoke. Then pausing opposite to May, he strove to speak in a calm and composed voice, as he said again,—

"May, you have saved my life."

"And you, Claude," she sobbed, "have broken my heart."

"Is this kind, May, at such a time as this?"

"Kind! Oh, Claude—Claude, can you utter a reproach? What are you? Dare I answer my own question. You were poor, forlorn, dejected; what are you now?"

"None of those, May."

"Worse, worse, a thousand times worse, for you then stood upon a rock of adamant, you sat upon a throne to which angels might bow down in reverence."

"You speak in riddles, May, I must confess my inability to understand you."

"The rock you stood upon, and the throne upon which nature had placed you, have both one name. That name is innocence."

"Let others upbraid me for my course," he said, "from you, May, I did not expect reproaches."

"They are not reproaches, Claude. Witness these tears, that I speak in all the sadness of grief, and not in anger. Hark! Do you understand those shouts?"

"I do not."

"The mob congratulates itself upon the escape of a criminal, and even I am from this moment involved in your guilt and your shame. I who by word or deed have wronged no one, I am at last betrayed even by my better feelings, to be the partner of iniquity. Your guilt is now my guilt, for I have received and continue to shelter the guilty man, against whom the hand of justice is raised. Thus, Claude, no man can err, but he brings sin and sorrow upon others as well as himself."

"This state of things can soon be altered," said Claude, bitterly. "The balcony by which you but a few moments since admitted me, is close at hand. It will relieve you from the weight of my presence, by leaving this house in the manner that I entered it, and the first declaration I make to my captors, shall be one exculpatory of you, for I will declare that instead of affording an asylum to the highwayman, you refused him one with the bitterest reproaches. Farewell."

"Claude, Claude."

He waved his hand, and strode into the dark room.

With a cry of dismay May rushed after him, and while his hand was upon the shutters, she flung herself into his arms.

"Claude. Brother. Take my heart from my bosom and see how yet you dwell in its inmost recesses. Oh, Claude—Claude, if I could but die for you!"

"Let me go, May, I know I am unworthy of your affection. I know you did all you could to turn me from the course of life I have adopted, but I would not take your counsel, and therefore it is unfair of me now to involve you in any difficulty for my sake. I am lost, I know, and the steps in life, that I have taken I cannot now recede from. I do not now speak in anger, May."

"No—no, Claude. You shall not go."

"Nay, I pray you let me. It was the thoughtlessness of a moment that made me accept an asylum here. When I saw you, of all houses in this great city, I ought to have avoided this.

May clung to him still, and he could not without absolute violence have extricated himself from her embrace, and that of course, he was loth to use, so that she succeeded in detaining him until the procession of the doomed man, and the roar of the multitude of people that accompanied it were past, and but a confused murmur came upon their ears; Claude listened attentively, and then turning to May, he said,—

"Sister, it is rather sad to meet thus. How have you fared since last we parted? I have thought of you day and night, and sought you, and employed others to seek you, but all in vain. My eyes never rested upon your face, until I stopped the coach at Ealing Common, in which, to my surprise, I found you seated. I nearly fell from my horse in the suddenness of the recognition. I knew your voice, and yet could scarce believe it was you. I thought some resemblance of tones might have cheated me, but when I came to look at the little bead purse you handed to me, and knew it had been our mother's I could no longer doubt."

"Yes, Claude, it was our mother's, and it is the only relic I have of her,—I thought it might arouse dormant feelings within your breast, and make virtue once more an inmate of your heart—did you not feel something, when you looked upon it.

"There is a gulf, May, now between me and what the world calls virtue, that I may never hope to pass. You got back that purse with my tears and kisses upon it."

"Oh, Claude, you are not lost."

"You know not what."

"Yes, Claude. Indeed, indeed I do. There is—there always is, even in this life, a future for those who have the courage to dedicate it to virtue. Do not delude yourself with the vain and specious argument, that because you have sinned you must still sin."

"But, May, would you have me from some romantic notion of repentance, voluntarily give myself to the hangman?"

"No, no, no—I—oh, no. That would not follow. Your better nature would so show itself, that for once an attribute of heaven—mercy, would be borrowed, by those who hold the scales of human justice, and you would be spared."

"Alas! my May, you speak more, much more like the heroine of some romance, than as one, who, in this matter-of-fact world, has known what sorrow is. I tell you, sister, that having chosen, and so far proceeded in my present course of life, I have no hope, no chance of any other. I must now, like the forlorn hope of an army, push on, as the only chance of preserving, for yet awhile my existence. I must fall at last, and I can but protract the arrival of that day. Do not urge me more upon this impossible point."

"You speak desparingly, Claude."

"Not so, May. Hopefully I speak. It is true that I am a highwayman, and that society is up in arms against me. I stop a rich man upon the highway, and by force I take some of his money, but what I do I do boldly. I am not a lawyer—a member of parliament, so that even if people in their indignation at my proceedings were to go so far as to call me a thief, I am not a sneaking thief, such as those I have mentioned; nor am I a tradesman who will go to church regularly every Sunday, and yet all the week be fattening and guzzling upon the products of the hard earnings of others, whose boots, in point of fact, he is perhaps scarcely worthy to polish. No, May, I deceive nobody, and when I stop a traveller with a well-lined purse, and cry, 'stand and deliver!' I think myself a worthier man than many, who are most especially commended to Providence, and held up as patterns of everything that is good."

"You do not mean what you say, Claude."

"Do I not? I can hold up my right hand, and take my oath of it."

The sound of carriage wheels suddenly pausing in the street below, now attracted the attention of both brother and sister, and May trembled as she said—

"It is Mrs. Brereton and—and——"

"She whom I heard named Cicely," exclaimed Claude. I bless the danger that has once more taught me there is a chance of gazing on that lovely face."

"Are you mad, Claude? What can you mean? If they should find you here, what can I say? I am lost, lost."

"How, sister. I am not ugly enough to frighten them, am I?"

"Can you jest at such a time as this? Oh, Claude, what shall I do? When I was friendless and destitute in the streets of London, chance, or the goodness of Heaven, brought me in contact with these ladies. I told them that I had no home, but I concealed my real name, and instead of May Duval, I called myself May Russel. Since then they have afforded me an asylum. Oh, if they should now find they have been deceived, and that I was sister to a—a——"

"Highwayman, you would say."

A sharp tat tat at the street door interrupted the conversation, and May glanced about her, in a distracted manner.

"You must hide, Claude," she said, "you must hide."

"Wherever you please," he replied. "Only place me somewhere where I will have a chance of seeing the young lady, named Cicely, that is all I ask, and I shall be patient, if I am forced to remain twelve-months, wherever you place me."

There was a large cupboard in the room, close to the fire place, and into that May hastily pushed Claude, and closed the door upon him, just as the street door closed again, after admitting the ladies Brereton to the house, and May had only just time to open the shutters of the front room, before they ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER XI.

IT is true that a servant girl, who was in the kitchen of the house at the time Claude Duval had taken refuge in it, might have been cognisant of the fact, but when the riot began, and the whole street was in an uproar, she had prudently got into the coal cellar, nor did she emerge therefrom until the ladies Brereton, who upon their arrival in London had taken for a short time that house furnished as it was, knocked at the door.

Thus it was that not only was Claude's presence unknown to the ladies, but May had had the opportunity of holding the brief and agitated conversation with him, which we have recorded, and which, as is usual enough with such arguments, concerned neither party, while it certainly had the effect of paining both.

"Oh, mum," said the girl to Miss Brereton, there's been such a *riotation* in the streets, mum. They have been taking Thirty-two-string Jack to be hung, mum, leastways I ain't quite sure that's the number of strings, but it's something like that, mum."

"How alarmed you look, Ann," said Cicely.

"Yes, miss, I is all that. Will you walk up? There's a good fire in the drawing-room. Oh, you would have been *scarified*, if you had been here, Miss, when the *riotation* was. I got into the cellar, and so heard it all over my own head, though I couldn't see much of it, in consequence, you see, miss, of the roof."

Cicely was evidently in a dejected state, but the peculiar phraseology of Ann extorted a smile even from her, as she ascended the staircase. May was in hope that the ladies would go into the front room, but to her chagrin, for she was not very mindful of Claude's request that he might be placed somewhere where he could command a view of Cicely, they sat down in the back room, and old Mrs. Brereton, after a few remarks, looked closely at May, and said—

"Why, child, you have been crying."

"Have I, madam!" said May, scarcely knowing in her confusion what she replied, to the most inopportune, but yet kind inquiry.

"Your eyes tell that you have. Look at her, Cicely. Ah! my dear, what have you to cry for? You are not as I am, full of grief and uncertainty regarding a son."

"Or as I am regarding a brother," said Cicely.

May could hardly restrain her tears from flowing afresh at this, but by a great effort she did put on a show of outward composure, as she said—

"Then all inquiry regarding Mr. Markham Brereton is fruitless?"

"Quite so," said Cicely. "It is quite clear my brother has not arrived in London, or he would have gone to Mr Hughes, the lawyer, to ascertain where we were staying. How strange it is that we should hear nothing of him since he trotted on to see that the road was clear as we came to town. Do you recollect, May—I do not, but my mother thinks the highwayman who stopped the carriage said something to intimate that he had met Markham."

"He did," said May, in a half stifled tone.

"But what was it, my dear?" said the old lady.

"It was only an intimation that he had been informed that there was an invalid in the carriage, and who else but Mr. Brereton could have so informed him?"

"But, Markham is repulsive to strangers, rather than communicative," said Cicely.

"Certainly he is," added Mrs. Brereton. "Alas! alas! all these things will bring me to my grave—I can see that."

The old lady's tears began to flow, and May blamed herself for not asking explicitly of Claude if he had had any encounter with Mr. Mark Brereton.

There was a painful silence for a few moments duration, which was interrupted by a slight exclamation from Cicely, who picked up from the floor close to her feet a small piece of folded paper.

"What is it?" cried May.

"I know not," replied Cicely. "It seemed to fall at my feet only just now."

She opened the paper, and to the surprise of herself and her mother, read the following words:

"Mr. Brereton did meet Claude Duval, but he is not hurt, and will soon be with you."

"Gracious Heavens! cried Mrs Brereton, "who wrote that?"

"Are we in a land of enchantment?" cried Cicely.

May trembled as she said—"Perhaps some one in the street entangled it in your dress." Cicely seemed to be satisfied. A hurried footstep on the stairs announced the arrival of Markham. After the first burst of congratulation had subsided, he related his adventures on the road to his mother, Cicely, and May; not omitting to eulogise the character of the highwayman for his generosity. When Mrs. Brereton in return gave him an account of their adventure, "I am sure, Markham," said Mrs. Brereton, "that the highwayman took his pocket-book." "Ah!" said Markham, "and the contents, most likely, are by this time in the fire. By-the-by, there are several men dogging about this house, and as I came in they looked very hard at me, indeed, as if I had some sinister purpose in view. What can it mean?" May was ready to drop from agitation, which was, most luckily for her not observed, and Markham went to the window to look out, to see if the men were still watching the house, little suspecting that those were officers, who had the best possible reason for supposing Claude Duval to be concealed on the premises. Their intention was to wait until the return of their comrades, from the execution of Sixteen-string Jack, and then make an attack upon the house. As he looked from the window, Markham, to his utmost surprise, saw a horseman coming down the road, whom he knew to be no other than Tom Brereton, but so bespattered with mud and dirt was he, that scarcely a vestige of his clothing was left free from such a covering. His face, too, was horribly scratched, and a more deplorable figure than on the whole he presented, could not have been imagined. "Here's an apparition!" cried Markham. Cicely and her mother as well as May, ran to the window to see the cause, and there, sure enough, they saw the victimised Tom, and on the impulse of the moment, Markham threw open the window, and called aloud to him.

"Good God! is that you, Tom Brereton?"

At the voice Tom looked up, and uttered a hideous groan—relaxing his hold, of the horse, he rolled off it, close to the threshold of the house. Cicely looked all amazement, and Markham ran down stairs to the street door, to know what on earth could have reduced Tom to so miserable a plight, for his feelings towards him were much more those of contempt than anything else, while none of the family were so unjust as to blame him for claiming what was his own. The only objection they urged to his proceeding was, that he made his claim roughly, and carried it beyond their means of restoration.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Markham, when he dragged Tom into the passage.

"Oh! oh! oh!"

"Well, you can say something besides 'oh!' I suppose?"

"No I can't."

"Why you are covered with mud. Have you been riding a steeple chase?"

"I don't know, but I dare say I have as I came along. Oh dear! oh dear! They soon caught me, and wasn't I thankful; then they upset me, and wasn't

I glad; then they collared me after rolling me in the mud, and then what do you think?"

"I really don't know what to think."

"They said I was Claude Duval, the great highwayman."

"You Claude Duval?"

"Yes, to be sure, that's why they run after me, crying, 'Stop him!' Ah, I have had such a job! they soon found out that I wasn't the highwayman, however; but I'll tell you all about it soon. Only let me lie down, somewhere, for a little while, and get off these horrid muddy clothes."

"I don't know, cousin Tom," said Markham, "that we are particularly called upon to show you any courtesy, for you were rather scant of that article with us, but it is not my disposition to return evil for evil, and as this is for the time being our home, you can come in, and I will see that you are accommodated with a bed."

"Oh, thank you. You haven't seen anything of my black pocket-book, have you?"

"How should I know anything of it?"

"Ah, well! dear me. All my bones ache, they do indeed. Oh, oh, oh! Stop him—stop him. There goes the horse! Well, I thought at last, I would keep that as a set off against what I had lost; but I am certainly the most unlucky fellow. Oh, dear!"

Markham assisted him up stairs to a bed-room, where he left him, to get rid, by himself, of some of the dirty apparel in which he was enveloped, before he questioned him any further regarding the manner in which he came to be so situated.

May, who had been so anxiously revolving the best means of getting the party out of the room in which Claude was concealed, had ordered Ann to lay a lunch in the parlor, so that now it was announced, and they all descended to it, May promising to join them immediately, but her object was to speak to Claude, so the moment the room was clear, she opened the cupboard, and with a face as pale as death itself, she confronted him.

"Fly, oh fly," she said, "fly at once, or all will be discovered, and after the deceit I have practised, I can hope for no further friendship from those who have been so kind to me."

"Fear nothing, May, I may yet be able to protect you."

"It is not the loss of their protection, but it would be the loss of their good opinion, that would cut me to the very heart."

"Nay you will not lose the good opinion of any one, whose good opinion is worth the having; but I know this is no place for me."

"Then fly from it at once."

"Into the arms of the officers, do you mean? Did you not hear Mr. Brereton say that men were watching the house? For whom do they watch, but for Claude Duval?"

"Alas! alas! What can be done?"

"I scarcely know, yet. But while I am thinking about it, take this pocket-book; it did belong to the young man called Tom, who was in the carriage with you. It contains various documents connected with his property as well as the proofs of his personal identity, I wish you to give it to Mr. Brereton."

"How am I to do that, Claude?"

"Place it somewhere in such a position that he cannot fail to see it, and now tell me is there any possibility of getting on top of the house?"

"Yes, I think there is."

"Then do you go down to your lunch and leave me to manage my own escape. What's that noise and shouting in the street?"

May ran to the window and looked.

"It is the cavalcade returning from the execution of Sixteen-string Jack," she said,—

"Ah, poor Jack," said Claude. "Well, well, that's past now."

"Claude, Claude, they stop here. The officers dismount. They advance to the house. Oh Claude—you are lost—lost."

"All in danger are not lost, May. Go down stairs, and whatever may happen express no surprise or apprehension. Even if you should see me taken, I charge you by the affection I know you still bear to me, to say nothing."

He dashed up the staircase, as he spoke, towards the bed-rooms of the house, and as he did so he heard a clamorous knocking at the door. Now, Claude had not the most distant idea that Tom Brereton had been brought into the house, and when he went hurriedly into the first room he came to, in order to see what its capabilities of concealment were, he was not a little surprised to find a man in bed, looking the picture of fright.

"Murder, murder!" said Tom, "what's that?"

"Why, who are you," said Claude.

"Eh?"

They confronted each other for a few moments in silence, the thoughts of each being busy in different ways.

Claude was considering how he could turn this meeting in the way of his escape, and Tom was wondering to see a man in quaker garments by his bedside, with anything but the manner and countenance of a quaker.

"Oh dear, who are you?" added Tom.

"Are you the fellow that was robbed by Claude Duval," said Claude, "and made to gallop away upon a horse, with six men after you?"

"Yes—oh dear yes."

"Then your life is not worth two minutes purchase. I would not give a farthing for it, you will be a dead man in five minutes' notice."

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Claude Duval uttered these words to the terrified and already nearly distracted Tom Brereton he glared at him with such a comical expression of face, that had he, Claude, not been seriously bent upon mischief, he must have laughed. As it was, however, he did continue to keep something like a grave countenance, as he repeated—

"Yes, you are even now in fact a dead man."

"A—dead—man? Oh, oh! Mur——"

"Hush! Such exclamations can only hasten a catastrophe which I would willingly prevent, if possible. Listen to me. It will be some satisfaction to you to know in your last moments, why it is you are sacrificed. Listen."

Tom only glared at Claude with a bewildered look, and trembled so that he shook the whole bed, and set the rings by which the hangings were suspended gingling furiously.

"You are aware," added Claude, "that you were robbed by that celebrated highwayman, Claude Duval, who took away your black pocket book, and who afterwards to avoid pursuit from himself, got you mounted on a horse, and set you off at full gallop with half a dozen men after you, who thought they were pursuing him."

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Well, Claude is taken, and it is believed by all the highwaymen and cracksmen in London, that you were at the bottom of a deep-laid scheme for his capture, and in fact have been successful in effecting it, the consequence of which is that dreading your power and finesse, they have come to the determination to destroy you."

"But it ain't true. I have no power—no finesse, Oh, dear, oh, dear."

"That's likely enough, but you won't make them believe it."

"Then what am I to do?"

"I am the chief of the Bow street runners, and I will save you if I can; only you must obey me implicitly."

"I will, I will. Hark! do you hear that?"

"Yes, they have forced open the street door."

While he was speaking to Tom Brereton, Claude had cast his eyes anxiously about the room, and in one corner he had espied a large chest, to which he now pointed significantly, saying—

"I suppose you have no particular objection to get in there?"

"In where?"

"In that chest. It strikes me that by so doing you may save yourself; I can just at present see no other way of aiding you. The thieves who are looking for you, expressly to take vengeance upon you, will not probably thinking of looking there, while I with some of my fellow officers, will come and take the chest away to a place of safety with you in it."

"Well, but——"

"As you please, your fate be upon your own head. All I have to do is to go and make oath before the magistrate of Bow-street, that I offered you a mode of escape which you thought proper to reject. I have the honor of bidding you good day, sir."

"Oh, no, no, no. Stop, I—I will do it. Oh, dear what a sad thing to be so knocked about to be sure. I have only just escaped the back of a wild horse, and now I am forced to get into a great box."

"It is the fortune of war."

"Is it? But I don't want to be in war with anybody, I only want to be quiet, that's all. The idea now of anybody thinking that I laid a deep scheme for anybody, I wish I could lay one to get home again, and be in peace and comfort, that I do. I know all this will be the death of me."

With groans and sighs, Tom got out of his bed, and with no little difficulty stowed himself away in the chest, which having the key in the lock, Claude securely fastened, and then just as he heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs, he darted into the bed, and covered all but his face up with the abundant clothing that was on it."

The door of the room was dashed open in another moment, and eight or ten officers entered it. They were well armed, for they evidently expected some resistance, in the capture of such a man as Claude Duval. They looked rather dissatisfied, when they only found a bedroom, and a man lying in bed with a languid aspect which Claude put on very consistently.

"Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen!" he said. "Who are you? Oh! tell me who are you?"

"Who are you?" cried one of the officers.

"I hardly know, for I can't exactly say whether I'm asleep or awake, gentleman. I was asleep, but—that is to say, I think I was asleep, and then my name was Mr. Brereton, but just now a fellow came bang into the room with a pistol in his hand."

"A pistol! That must be our man. Was it Claude Duval?"

"Who?"

"Claude Duval, the great highwayman?"

"Lord, how should I know? I'm a respectable man, and have got no such acquaintance."

"Where did he go?"

"I was telling you, but you are so impatient! He held the pistol against my head, and says he, 'Say one word and you are a dead man,' says he—'for raa my mare Sue lose her wind, if I don't blow your brains out.'"

"It's our man," cried the officers. "There can be no mistake now. Where did he go?"

"Well, I'm a telling you, but you get so furious. You must be a sad fellow at home, that you must—my father's a wool stapler, and he often used to say to me, 'Tom,' says he, 'whenever you——'"

‘Confound your father! We want to know where Claude Duval went.’

‘Well, I’m telling you. He didn’t wait for me to say anything; but after he had threatened my life, in a manner of speaking, he popped into that great box there.’

The officers raised a shout of exultation, and three or four of them rushed towards the chest, and sat down on the lid.

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ laughed he who had carried on the brief conversation with Claude. ‘Ha! ha! ha! I rather think we have the fox in a trap now.’

‘Oh you needn’t be afraid of his getting out,’ said Claude, ‘I forgot to tell you that he asked me to lock it up, and take the key, and say my clothes were in it, that’s all, and I did lock it, and here’s the key, gentlemen.’

There was at this moment some half stifled cry from the box, but it was not sufficiently clear to be understood, and the officers felt then that assurance was doubly sure.

‘What say you, comrades,’ said one. ‘We know that our prisoner is a troublesome fellow, suppose we take him off to Newgate just as he is, box and all?’

‘That’s an uncommonly good idea,’ said Claude.

‘So it is,’ said the others, for they all seemed to shrink from a personal encounter with so redoubtable a personage as Claude Duval, and the opportunity of taking him away safely in a chest they considered was by no means to be slighted.

A furious knocking arose from the inside of the box, which convinced Claude that Tom Brereton had heard sufficient of the conversation to find out how he had been imposed upon, but the officers would by no means consent to his release, and the more violently he kicked the panels of the chest, the more intent were they upon getting him away just as he was.

‘We are very much obliged to you, sir,’ said the principal of them to Claude. ‘Very much obliged, indeed, so now will take away your troublesome customer, and you may be quite sure you will never be troubled any more, for he will be hanged at Tyburn next sessions, as safe as we have him here in the box.’

‘No doubt of that,’ said Claude. ‘I’d take my oath of it, I would, gentlemen, and when he is hung, you may take your oaths I shall be there, and in the best place, too.’

The officers took up the chest among them, and staggered down the stairs with it, while one speeded the others, and called loudly for a cart in which to carry the treasure to Newgate. One was soon pressed into the service, and away the whole party went, most specially delighted with the success that had crowned their efforts, and quite congratulating themselves that there were no more of them to share the £200 reward amongst.

‘Well, Mr. Tom Brereton,’ soliloquised Claude, as he sprung from the bed, when the officers had fairly departed, ‘you are doomed to be of great service to me. Twice have I owed my escape to your accidentally coming into my way, but the mistake will be discovered as soon as they get to Newgate, and perhaps sooner, so this is no place for me.’

He stood at the door and listened for a few moments, and then, not hearing any one stirring in the lower part of the house, he cautiously slipped down and reached the passage in perfect safety. Just, however, as he was passing the parlor door he heard the sounds of weeping in the room, and peeping through the crevice of the door, he saw Cicely Brereton sitting at a table absorbed in grief.

‘My poor dear mother,’ she said,—‘she is at last no more. Alas, alas, when will Mark return with the physician?’

‘What can be the meaning of this,’ thought Claude. ‘Why the old lady must have died suddenly. How beautiful Cicely is, and yet how absurd it is of me to continue thus looking at her, and drinking in such deep draughts of love. She can never be more to me than a beautiful picture. Oh, would that I had never seen her, for then I should have continued to be the same care

less fellow I was, but which now I can never be again, for the thought will at times come over me, that by a different course of life I might almost have made myself worthy of such treasure as Cicely Brereton."

He felt that he ought to go at once, and yet while there was still the opportunity of looking at the beautiful girl, he could not make up his mind to tear himself away, but like a worshipper at some shrine, he stood in an attitude of rapt devotion to her charms.

Suddenly she rose and approached the door. He had not time to leave the passage, and in another moment they were face to face. A slight scream came from the lips of Cicely.

"Be not alarmed," said Claude, "you never in all your life, Cicely Brereton, had less cause."

"Who and what are you?"

"Pardon me, if I reply to neither question, and likewise pardon me for saying that although there is not, and cannot be, the most distant shadow of a hope in my mind of ever calling you mine, yet I love you as never yet man loved, for it is a love without hope, and yet complete."

Without giving her time to make any reply to this most singular declaration of attachment, he took her hand, and for one moment pressed it to his lips. In the next he was gone, and May, who had been in the back parlor with the corpse of old Mrs. Brereton, who had suddenly expired without a sigh, in consequence of hearing voices, made her appearance only just in time to see the street door shut after him. She did not, however, see that it was her brother Claude.

"Oh, May, May!" said Cicely, "who has been here?"

"I know not."

"A man in gray clothing, and—and handsome, yet bold. There was something, too, in the tones of his voice that I seemed to remember. He has just left the house."

"Thank God!" exclaimed May, for she knew that he was in safety, although how he had managed to effect his escape from the officers she could not tell.

"Yes, thank God!" said Cicely

"Yes, yes, at such a time as this, surely, we want no visitors, Cicely. Oh, that Markham would return."

Markham did return quickly, bringing with him the nearest physician, but all the skill and all the learning that the world ever saw, could not again have rekindled the flame of existence in the now senseless form of Mrs. Brereton.

We must leave the Breretons now, to give what course they may please to the natural grief that was sure to affect them, while we follow the more stirring fortunes of the gallant Claude Duval. Oh, how noble and admirable a man was spoiled, when by the force of adverse circumstances such an one as he, with all his chivalry of spirit and high aspirations, took to the road for a subsistence. Surely there is something wrong in the constitution of society, in which it is accident and not desert, that places people in favorable circumstances.

To one man of genius, who, from some confluence of circumstances over which he has had no control, meets with the proper field of exertion, and the reward of his ability, there are a hundred who go to the grave unknown, unappreciated, and unpitied.

Long, long ago, it was capacity that made a man; but now-a-days Shakspeare might starve in London, with Hamlet in one pocket and Macbeth in another, if he had no money to push them and to pay for a shoal of puffing advertisements in the newspapers or the reviews. It is capital now that governs all things; and virtue—talent—nobility of soul, if yoked to poverty, may go a begging on the highway, or as Claude Duval did, take to the bolder course of robbing travellers with well-filled purses.



CHAPTER XIII.

CLAUDE, when he reached the street, looked neither to the right nor to the left. In the first case he felt confident that all the officers had departed with Tom Brereton and the box to Newgate, and even if he were wrong, and any one lingered on the spot, his looking for him would not make the danger of an encounter with him the less; so Claude walked on with as measured an appearance as any chance passenger could wish to have.

He had not gone very far though, before he became conscious that a shabby looking man was creeping after him.

In order to make sure that his imagination was not deceiving him, he turned suddenly and sharply, and a few paces in the contrary direction, when the shabby looking man was so confounded by this unexpected manœuvre, that he ran into a doorway, which proceeding quite convinced Claude that he was right in his first conjecture, and that this man, for some object, was watching him.

This was not a state of things that he was likely to allow to continue, so he slackened his pace just as he arrived opposite to a stand of hackney coaches; he turned again as abruptly as before, and reaching the man before he could get out of the way, he said—

“What do you want with me?”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said the man.

“For what?”

"Why—a—a—I—you see I'm no fool; I know what I know."

"And what's that?"

"You are Claude Duval."

"Well?"

This answer of Claude's took the spy so much by surprise, that he could not tell for a moment or two how to avert it, but then feeling that what he had to say must be said quietly, he strove to put on an appearance of boldness as he spoke.

"I am a police spy," he said. "The officers employ me to ferret out things, sir. They pay me badly; give me a £20 note, and I don't see you at all till the next time. They think they have you, but I did not, so I lingered about the house, and you see I am right. Here you are, sir."

"And why don't you take me? You know there is a reward of £200 to whoever will lodge me in Newgate."

"Yes, sir, but then I—I would rather not try to do such a thing, I'm afraid you would not let me. Ha! ha! You understand, sir."

"Perfectly. You are afraid."

"Well, I—I, you may call it so if you like, sir. Twenty pound is not much for a gentleman like you, who gets your money so easy, you know."

"But if I have not got it?"

"Why then I'm afraid I shall have to stick by you and call for help, and share the reward with some half dozen people who may come to my assistance."

"Well, well," said Claude, with a smile, "you shall have what you so absolutely require of me. Call a coach, will you."

The spy beckoned to a coachman, and a vehicle from the stand came to the curb-stone, and the driver, with all his great-coats, let down the steps and adjusted the straw in the inside, while Claude and the spy stood close to the large windows of a confectioner's shop.

"Well, coachman," said Claude, "you see this gentleman by my side. He is what is called a bum bailiff. Take a good look at him."

The coachman stared, and so did the spy, but they had neither of them much time for reflection, for Claude suddenly pounced upon the latter, and seizing him by the back of the neck with one hand, and about the middle with the other, he flung him through the confectioner's window with such tremendous force, that he carried all before him. There was a crash of glass, a yell from the spy, and a scream from the young lady in the shop, who had been reading a novel when she was thus intruded upon.

"My eye!" exclaimed the coachman.

"Drive round two turnings, and then put me down," cried Claude Duval, as he sprang into the coach. "You shall have a guinea for the job."

Never did the coachman spring on his seat with more activity—never were the old horses so earnestly solicited by voice and whip to show that there was some mettle in them yet, and never had the crazy vehicle gone through the air with such rapidity since it had been invalidated from regular family service. The two turnings were soon taken, and then Claude alighted, and giving the coachman the guinea he had promised, he said,—

"Now drive on, and if you are overtaken and questioned, you have only to say it's a mistake, and let them look in, and so you have nothing to fear."

"Ah, bless you, sir!—you is one after my own heart," said the coachman.

"Good luck to yer, sir, wherever you goes, and whosomedever yer be."

Claude waved his hand, and then dashed down a narrow court, which led him into the not very salubrious parish of Soho, from whence he made his way by a great number of very obscure turnings, with all of which, however he seemed wonderfully familiar, towards the city, his object being to reach an inn near Moorfields, called the "Reindeer," where he not only knew he should get shelter until night, but where his gallant and docile steed Sue was, for he had not brought the creature upon the perilous expedition of shaking hands with Sixteen-string Jack, on his route to execution. He valued Sue much too

highly to risk her loss, and as we have seen, he was forced to abandon the horse he rode, upon that occasion, but as it was only borrowed from a livery-stable keeper, it gave him no sort of concern, as he knew the owner would easily get it again.

After about half an hour's rather hard walking, during which Claude's mind was much more full of thoughts of the beautiful Cicely Erereton, than of the many perils that surrounded himself, he reached a narrow street in Moorfields, which is not now in existence, for most of the houses perished one night in a fire.

About the middle of this street is the Reindeer, opposite which is a little tobacconist's shop. Claude directed his steps to this, and after exchanging a few compliments with an old woman, jumped over the counter, and entered the bar-parlor. He was in the cellar of the Reindeer in time to hear the following—

"We talk of him among ourselves. We whisper about him in the street, tell stories of him in the flash kens, and so we name him, and do mischief continually. As there has been another hundred offered for him by the secretary of state, within these three hours, I propose that we never utter the name of Claude Duval, except when we know all's right, but find out some other name to call him by, that the grabs will be some time finding out."

"Agreed!" cried a dozen voices, and then one deep stentorian voice said—

"Let's call him as he is so *unkimmon perlite*, Gentleman Jack."

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"As good a name as could be hit upon," said the former speaker. "Let it be Gentleman Jack. There's such lots of Jacks among us, that the grabs won't know who we mean."

"And we is all gentlemen," said the proposer of the name.

"Certainly. We live upon our means, and do no work, so gentlemen we are, and that's settled then, my pals, so its understood when we talk of Gentleman Jack, we mean —"

"Claude Duval!" cried Claude himself, opening the door and suddenly appearing among them, to their astonishment and delight. A cheer rose that brought the dust out of the crevices of the old joints overhead, and the landlord made his appearance in some alarm, to know what was the cause of the uproar.

"What's the row now?" said the landlord.

"Hurrah for Gentleman Jack! Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!"

"And who the deuce is he?"

"A dozen bowls of punch, landlord," said Claude, in a clear voice that rose high above the babel-like confusion of sounds around him.

If any thing had been wanting to raise Claude's popularity to the very height, this liberal dose of punch would have done it, and all the scruples of the landlord to the uproar vanished in a moment, as he disappeared to execute the order, and it was by such prodigal liberality that Claude found partisans go where he would, and friends almost at every turn.

The motley crowd pressed eagerly around him, and no monarch on his throne ever had such ready slaves and real admirers as Claude Duval, sitting on a wooden stool in a cellar at the Reindeer. There was not a word that fell from him that was not treasured up to be repeated, and his looks were studied with quite a perplexing perseverance.

"Well, landlord," he said, to that individual, as the first bowl of punch was by him produced; "is Sue all right?"

"As fresh as a daisy, Claude."

"Stop!" cried one. "We call Claude Gentleman Jack now, so mind your eye."

"And well you may call him gentleman any thing," said the landlord, "for in all my blessed life I never comed near such a gentleman; he's a out and outer, he is, bless him. I always feels as if I could cry for a week when ho

comes here and spends all his tin like a brick, I does. Oh, he's one of the right sort, he is a regular kidney."

"Drink, my pals," said Claude, "I'm going to borrow a trifle to-night of the Bishop of Exeter, as he comes from his country house to town."

"You don't mean that, Gentleman Jack," cried one, but the evident marks of gratification on his face showed how much he hoped Claude did mean it.

"I have said it," said Claude; "it is not so troublesome a job as to shake hands with an old friend this morning while two hundred pounds went begging for my head: I will do it, for I want to have a look at the bishop's young wife, who report says is the beauty of the age."

"Bravo, Claude! bravo, Claude!" said one.

"Take that," cried one, and then planting a blow upon his nose that brought forth the blood in a ruddy stream; "take that, don't you know we all agreed to call him Gentleman Jack?"

A quarrel was now upon the point of taking place, but Claude Duval rose and got a hearing, upon which he said.—

"Gentlemen all, I have to remark that I have no objections to a fight, but if we are to make that a portion of the evening's amusement, mind you don't any of you upset the punch, that's all."

This restored good humor; the belligerents shook hands, and at ten o'clock that night Claude Duval was on the road.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE then Bishop of Exeter was notoriously one of the vainest, proudest prelates on the bench; of course he was a follower and disciple of the meek and humble precepts of Christianity, and therefore he was insolent and overbearing to those who were not so great in the eyes of the stupid world as himself, while to the magistrates of the land, particularly to the monarchy, the bishop was all smiles and sweetness.

This was the man whom Claude Duval announced his intention of robbing, being probably incited to do the deed from the notoriety which it would bring upon him, as well as by a desire to look at the beautiful young bride of the meek and humble man of God.

The bishop was past the middle of life, and he had taken unto himself a young damsel of eighteen, as a wife, whom he had purchased of her friends, and we may likewise say of herself, by a settlement of two thousand pounds per annum, payable from the date of the ceremony that made her the help-mate of the pious and abstemious individual who, of course, was wholly devoted to the cause of religion.

How could he think, in common justice, of any thing else but the Gospel, when he was paid twelve thousand pounds a year for doing so?

But we prefer, after all, the highwayman to the bishop, so we will follow Claude, or Gentleman Jack, as his new name was, and at times we shall find it convenient to call him by the latter name a little, and at times by the former name alone.

Never before, during the whole of his short, but most chequered career, had Claude felt such a depression of soul as now afflicted him. He would truly have given his life for a pin's fee. The bridle hung listlessly upon the neck of his steed, and he gave himself up to bitter thoughts.

Such was his state as he reached the top of the Oxford Road, and saw the light that gleamed from either side of the Tyburn-Gate. The sight of that spot brought naturally enough some thoughts of Sixteen-string Jack to his mind.

"Now, sir," cried the tollman, "do you want to ride over the gate?"

"What is it?" said Claude, rather angrily, for he had been so immersed in his own reflections, that he did not notice how near he was to Tyburn Gate.

"Why it's the toll, if it's all the same to you, spooney," said the man.

"Take it," said Claude, "and lay the amount out in the purchase of better manners. What ho! my Sue—my gallant Sue!"

As he spoke he struck the man sprawling to the ground with the handle of his riding-whip, and in another instant the horse leaped the gate with surprising ease and agility, and took its rider at a gentle canter down the road.

"Now that just serves you right," said the other toll-man, to his prostrate companion, before whose bewildered eyes there danced a thousand lights. "You haven't been long here, to be sure, and you don't know folks as I know 'em. Now who do you suppose that was?"

"Where am I?"

"In a puddle in the Uxbridge Road, to be sure. Where should you be. I seed it all. That gemman as you offended drops a guinea every now and then at this here gate, and so we never asks him any questions when he comes through, whether he's a-coming fast or slow, and if you wants to know who it is, I can tell you—it's Claude Duval. So now don't be a fool another time, old fellow."

This was not much consolation to the new toll-man, but as by this time Claude was half a mile down the road, he had to pocket the affront and the blow he had received in the best way he was able to do.

In the meantime Claude, whom this little incident had restored, put Sue to a canter, and soon breasted Craven hill.

"Well, well," he said, "I may make myself miserable as long as I like, and it won't mend matters. She can never be mine, although I think it would almost drive me out of my mind, to hear that she was ever another's, and all I can do is to do her and those belonging to her all the good I can. Bless her sweet eyes, I shall never see their like in this world again."

His thoughts then turned somewhat to his sister May, and then there was some pleasure in thinking that she was safe from the world's storms, in the society and protection of such a being as Cicely Brereton; for although he, Claude, had certainly heard that the fortune of the Brereton family was not in the most brilliant state, yet he had too little thought of the every-day concerns of life, to suppose that such a gloriously fashioned creature as Cicely could ever be the sport of a malignant destiny.

These thoughts lasted him until the last gleaming light of the suburbs of London was left behind him, and the keen air from the fields opposite Holland Park blew upon his cheek. A distant clock struck eleven, and Claude deliberately counted the sounds; and as the last one died away in faint echoes, he heard the tramp of a horse's feet approaching from the direction of Shepherd's Bush, close to where he now was.

Claude paused, and drew up by the road side.

The horseman approached rapidly, and by the time he was just opposite to where Claude had withdrawn his horse, the highwayman called aloud to him, saying,—

"Sir, if you are a Christian, tell me if the road is safe from highwaymen lower down."

"Oh, yes, I suppose it is," was the reply, as the man drew rein.

"I hope you are not deceiving me, sir; they say Claude Duval, the terrible highway robber, is on this road. I hope you are not he, for they tell me he is up to all sorts of tricks."

"Oh, stuff! I Claude Duval! Rubbish! I am the Bishop of Exeter's outrider; I gallop on before to pay the tolls and prepare a change of horses when required for the bishop."

"What! is the bishop on the road?"

"Yes, to be sure he is."

"Then I shall think myself safe, for no highwayman would have the impertinence to show himself under such circumstances. I should say good-night, sir, I thank you."

Claude galloped on towards the country, while the bishop's outrider proceeded townwards, after remarking to himself that the man who had just spoken to him was about the greatest goose he had met with for a long time.

"Well," said Claude to himself, "the bishop is on the road, that is one piece of news gained, at all events, which is worth the having; for now I will at once fly at my high game, and let go any meaner prey I may happen to meet."

There were some symptoms now of the moon rising. This was not exactly what Claude wanted, and yet it could not be said that he actually feared it, for he had not unfrequently committed some of his most daring exploits when the silver orb of night was fully in the ascendant.

"Humph," he said, "we have a light night, after all. Well, well, so be it; it is by boldness and effrontery I do what I do, and not by being befriended by darkness."

This was most literally true, and such was the terror which the very name of Claude Duval frequently inspired, that he might be likened to Cæsar; for he came, and saw, and conquered.

There was one state of things which, in his robberies upon the highway, Claude always wished, and that was to be as far from houses as possible; for in the immediate vicinity of dwelling places he certainly ran the risk of serious interruptions; but give him his prey alone, on the heath for example, and he truly considered himself monarch of all he surveyed.

Acting upon this feeling and from these considerations, his great object was to meet the bishop upon Ealing Common, which was then by no means the fertile and well-villad (if we may be allowed to coin such a term) place that it now is. On the contrary, it was in every sense of the word a barren spot.

The village of Ealing consisted of one public house and a few insignificant cottages; while Hanwell, its near neighbor, was more contemptible still, if we may except the fact that there was then a church and an old parsonage house, which gave a sort of importance to a place otherwise of none whatever, save in the eyes of certain admirers of the piscatory art, who were wont to angle in the Brent River, which thereabouts murmurs its gentle way through the meadows.

But Claude Duval was in no very poetic mood; so we, in accordance with his spirit, revert to more stirring scenes.

By the time he reached the common, the moon—a young one—was making a bold struggle to peep from amid the clouds, and see how the world was getting on; and it did so far succeed as to light up the road across the common, in bright contrast to the dark foliage that skirted it. We have before noticed a group of trees that grew to the left of the heath, and which Claude had before taken advantage of as a kind of dark background to the stirring picture he made take place in front of them. He paused again upon the spot.

"Now," he said to himself, "if this bishop should prove the man of courage he is represented, there may be a nice little case of church patronage for the government to dispose of to-morrow morning. We shall see—we shall see."

Claude applied all his attention to listening for the approach of the bishop's carriage—so much so, indeed, that he hardly noticed the sound of horses' feet coming in the direction whence he had so recently trotted; but just as he began to think the bishop was long in coming, he had the vexation of seeing, by the dim light from the again slightly clouded moon, a figure on horseback arrive upon the common.

"Confound you," muttered Claude, "whoever you are, I only hope you will pass on without observing me, and that, unless your eyes are tolerably keen, or rather intolerably keen, you may well do, for the moon is luckily behind me and throws where I stand into absolute gloom."

The horseman was coming on at a slow pace, and yet to the perception of Claude, as he anxiously watched his progress, it seemed as if either from intoxication or exhaustion, or perchance sudden illness, it was with the greatest difficulty he kept this seat in the saddle, reeling about as he was, and grasping the neck of the horse.

"What on earth can be the matter with the fellow?" thought Claude. "Now if the fool cannot get past here, he may be most confoundedly in my way.

It seemed as if the horseman however, was as anxious to get on as Claude could have possibly wished him, and that it was from some special reason to the contrary, that he made no quicker progress. Soon he arrived nearly opposite to where Claude Duval was concealed, and then the horse made a rather hasty movement, which nearly precipitated his rider from his back, and convinced Claude that it was not the animal, but he who rode him, that controlled what might have been a good pace.

The moon too at this moment, looked through a crevice in the murky sky, shining down with slant rays from behind the clump of trees, in whose deep shadow Claude was stationed, full upon the figure of the horseman.

As if surprised then, at the sudden gleam of moonlight, the stranger turned his horse's head towards it, and lifting off his hat, gave a deep groan. That groan was echoed by a sharp cry of astonishment and dismay, from the lips of Claude, for in the cold pale face before him, and upon which the moonbeams fell so clearly, as to make mistake impossible, he saw the features of Sixteen-string Jack!

CHAPTER XV.

THE sharp cry of alarm that had come from the lips of Claude Duval, when he recognised the pale and partially convulsed features of the man, who was hanged on that morning at Tyburn, was a sound so unusual to the ears of Sue, that for the first time since she had been in the possession of her present master, she took fright.

With a snort of alarm, the animal reared and turned completely round. Then bringing down its fore feet with great violence to the ground, it dashed at headlong speed among the trees.

Claude Duval it is true was astonished, unnerved, and terrified, but not to a sufficient extent to lose all self-command over himself, or power over his steed. If he had not exercised some sort of immediate control, he and Sue both would no doubt, have met with some tragical end among those trees, some of the overhanging branches of which would have dashed their brains out, but Claude gently drew rein, calling to the horse in his own familiar voice—

"What ho, my Sue? Gently, lass, gently!"

So habituated was she to obey the slightest signal given by him, either by rein or voice, that almost in a moment she paused, but Claude trembled himself, or the horse shook from fear, and made him think so."

Perhaps it was a little of both.

For the space of about five minutes, however, he sat on his saddle without making the least exertion to go back to his former place upon the heath, and during that time he was in such a state of utter bewilderment, that it could scarcely be said he had his proper senses about him.

"I am not superstitious," he said, at length, "but I have seen the ghost of Sixteen-string Jack to-night, as I am myself a living man! Yes I saw him."

Claude felt terribly embarrassed. If he admitted to himself the fact of the appearance of Sixteen-string Jack's apparition, he felt he must likewise open

his mind to the reception of a thousand things which his better reason had hitherto treated with disdain.

Slowly he turned his horse's head in the direction of the common again, and if such a state of feeling can be understood, we may say, that he both hoped and feared still to find the apparition on the spot where he had left it. At all events, his short progress back was marked by more nervous agitation than in all his life he had ever exhibited.

When he reached the precise spot, however, from whence he had caught a view of the appearance, although the moon was still shining clearly, the place was free from all intruders, and a silence as of the very grave reigned upon the common.

"'Tis gone," he said. "Gone, and for the remainder of my life, I shall be involved in a sea of doubt and conjecture regarding this affair, unless I see it once again; and if I do, I will follow it, aye, if it lead me to the gates of the infernal regions. So ho! my Sue, are you all right, my lass?"

He accompanied these words by a caress of his steed, who, by pawing the turf, and arching its neck, acknowledged the attention of the only one from whom it cared for such a kindness. Claude now rapidly recovered his usual devil-may-care style of thought, and his great fear was, that while he was away, although the time was brief, the bishop's carriage had passed, and so he had been cheated of all his time and trouble in waiting for its arrival.

No—no, I can hardly think that," he said, at length, with a half laugh, which did not sound very mirthful. "Jack would never serve me such a trick, I am confident, either alive or dead."

He glanced around him as he uttered these words, as if he almost feared this recklessness might again awake the apparition.

All was however, profoundly still; not a vestige of anything in the shape of the appearance of that which had terrified Claude Duval could be seen, and yet he hardly knew whether to consider that to be a relief or not, for he would fain have made assurance doubly sure, by once again looking upon that face, which he thought he had seen his last of in Oxford-street, and then again encountered so strangely on Ealing Common.

But all these thoughts and feelings soon gave way before the new idea that took possession of him, as he now heard the sound of rapidly approaching carriage wheels.

"All's right! All's right! He comes, he comes, and I shall soon see now whether or not this appearance to me upon the common was prophetic or not of coming evil."

The bishop's carriage was rather a large and unwieldy machine. The bishop, like bishops in general, knew what comfort was, and accordingly his carriage was more like a small house upon wheels, so full of all sorts of conveniencies was it, than anything else, and he was lolling in it, little suspecting any one would have the audacity to attack so very great a personage.

Claude put Sue into a quiet sort of canter, and just as the carriage was passing him, he fired a shot over one of the postillions' heads, and then cried,—

"Stand!"

The horse upon which the postillion rode reared, but the man drew rein and the carriage was stopped accordingly.

"Mark me, postillion," said Claude, "if you move on another step, as sure as I am a living man, and my name is Claude Duval, I will blow your brains out, and leave them upon the common to be picked up by the crows at day-break."

At the dreaded and well-known name of Claude Duval, the postillion cowered down in alarm, and took the utmost care that his horses should remain quiet, while Claude trotted up to the door of the carriage, from which the bishop was now looking with a face nearly purple with rage.

"The Bishop of Exeter, I presume," said Claude.

"Well, fellow, who are you?"

"Claude Duval, the highwayman."

"Drive on postillion—drive on—drive over the rascal."

"The postillion," said Claude, "has more brains and more politeness than his master. Civility, my lord bishop, may perhaps be policy on the present occasion."

"Take that," said the bishop, suddenly producing a pistol, but Claude's hand was in a moment upon the barrel of it, and turned it aside, so that some of the contents, when the bishop pulled the trigger, passed within dangerous proximity to his lordship's wig.

"Murder! Fire!" said the bishop.

"It is well, sir, that my temper," said Claude, as he snatched the pistol from his grasp, and flung it into the road, "is better than yours, or there would be a vacancy in the see of Exeter to-night."

"Do you want to murder me?"

"Why do you ask? If I wished to do so, I should hardly stand to parley with you. Remove your head, sir, out of my way."

The bishop drew in his head, and then Claude, as he looked into the carriage, saw by the aid of a small lamp hanging from the roof, in the interior a young and beautiful female, who betrayed much alarm.

"Is this your lady, sir?" cried Claude Duval. "Introduce me, if it be."

"I—I—really—Lady Exeter, this is—ahem! Claude Duval."

"You won't kill us?" said the lady.

"No, madam, although I suffer a most cruel death, from the fire of your eyes. My lord bishop, I will trouble you for your trinkets, and watch. Of you, madam, I only require some souvenir as a remembrance, not of your beauty, for that I cannot banish from my heart, but of this happy meeting."

No, no, no!" cried the bishop. "What impertinence!"

"I'm sure he's rather polite," said the lady.

"Polite! How, madam?"

"Be quiet, sir," said Claude. "Is it true, madam, that you are an exquisite dancer of the minuet de la cour?"

"Ah, I was before my——"

"Sacrifice you would say. Now, my lord bishop, I will trouble you for your money, and valuables. Sir, I thank you. You have handed me out promptly, although not with the most polished air in the world. From your intercourse with courts, you ought to know better, and as for you, madam, will you condescend to alight, and upon this dry and verdant sward, dance the minuet with me?"

"Death and fury!" said the bishop.

The lady offered no objection but the want of music, which Claude told her should be supplied by the bishop. Claude whistled the tune over, so that the bishop might follow him. After many protestations of incapability and unwillingness, the Right Rev. Father in God wanted to know the sum that would cause Claude to forego his freak, when he was informed that twenty years of his revenues would not be a sufficient temptation, as his mind was fixed upon it.

"My dear," said the bishop's lady, "do try the tune. It's very easy."

"Yes," said Jack, "easier almost than preaching."

"Ah, do!" added the lady.

"What! do you, too, take part with a highwayman against me? Oh, good gracious! Do I live to hear this? Upon my soul, madam, I believe you would rather dance with him than not."

"It will soon be over," sighed the lady.

"Well, well," said Claude, "we will not trouble his lordship, but manage the tune ourselves."

"As you please, sir," said the lady. "I have heard that you are now named Gentleman Jack."

"I hope, at all events, that in this brief interview, which I shall never forget to my dying day, I shall merit the appellation of gentleman."

"Oh, dear, yes."

"No, no!" roared the bishop.

"Really, my lord," said the lady, "I must say your conduct is not what one ought to expect from a dignitary of the church. If your lordship is so very averse to my saving your life by a mere dance by moonlight, I advise your lordship to lean back in the carriage and shut your eyes for the next quarter of an hour."

"Shut my eyes!"

"Yes," said Claude, "It is good advice."

"Is it? Confound me, if I think I can be too wide awake just now, that's my opinion."

"Come," laughed Jack, "if we wait all night, I am afraid we shall not induce his lordship to appreciate this little joke. We had better have the dance at once."

The lady made no objection, and as Claude whistled the tune, they both executed the measure with great grace. The lady panted slightly as Claude handed her back to the carriage, and either by design or accident, a gold bracelet she wore fell to the ground.

"Your bracelet, madam," said Claude, lifting it up.

"No—it is yours."

Claude bowed, and thrust it into the bosom of his apparel. The bishop now would not say a word, although Claude bade him rather an elaborate good-night; but the lady was by no means so obdurate, replying with seeming sweetness of voice, to the salutation of the highwayman.

"Drive on, postillion," cried Claude.

The lights of the carriage dashed before his eyes, and in another moment the vehicle was gone.

Claude walked calmly back to where his horse was standing, whistling the tune to which he had danced with the bishop's lady. He did not seem much to care in what direction he went; and as he was some time under the shadow of trees, he did not feel that there was a great change taking place in the weather. After he emerged, however, which was soon the case, to a more open part of the heath, he became aware of that fact.

At about a quarter of a mile ahead of him, he saw a dim flickering kind of light, and as the wind began to sigh and moan among the large trees that skirted the heath, he made his way at rather a swift canter in that direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE rain came pattering down, and Claude paused immediately at some short distance from the light that he descried. He could not quite make up his mind, whether to wait for a time, or to take further chances upon the road.

Under these circumstances, a simple piece of arithmetic always with him decided the question; he began to reckon up how many hours his horse had been on foot.

"Yes," he said, "it is time you should have a rest, my Sue, so girl we will go to this house, which if I mistake not is the Greyhound, and has been mentioned to me as a place where I can be safe."

He soon reached the door of the hostel, which however was closed upon the sound of his horse's feet; it seemed as if some man who was on the watch got curious, for he looked out at a window, nearly on a level with the road, saying—

"Who are you, old fellow?"

"Are you the landlord," said Claude.

"Yes, I am. What then? We don't take in travellers here so late."

"A word in your ear, my friend. Folks call me Claude Duval, who know me. Hush! I hear you have company. My horse and I only want one hour's rest. Do not mention me to any one."

The landlord was all obsequiousness directly, and Claude had soon got into the corner of a long room, in which were many persons, who seemed to have made up their minds to drown the sounds of the storm by their own boisterous laughter, and the noisy relation of their own adventures. At length one of them remarked, in a braggadocio style,—

"There is a stranger in the corner of the room there, who has heard all and says nothing. He takes his drink in silence. We don't know him, and as we consider ourselves bricks here and good fellows, I intend to have him out."

All eyes were now turned upon Claude Duval, as he sat in silence in the corner of the room to which he had retired. His thoughts were at that moment full of her whom he loved, and bitter imaginings were chasing each other like a hideous, brooding phantom through his brain.

And often, amid all other considerations and painful reflections, the remembrance of the appearance of Sixteen-string Jack upon Ealing Common would obtrude itself, giving, when it did so come across his memory, a powerful and almost electric shock to his nerves.

For a moment or two he was not conscious of having become the object of so much attention, but when, with a wink to his comrades, the man who had talked of bringing him out, walked up to the table and gave it a blow with his hand. Claude looked up.

"Hilloa! my friend," said the fellow. "Is this your brandy?"

"Yes," said Claude.

"Very well, then I will show you what good fellowship is by drinking it off for you, since you have been nursing it so long."

As he spoke he finished Claude's glass.

"Landlord," said Claude, "another glass of brandy-and-water."

The steaming beverage was brought to him, and then taking it in one hand, he rose, saying,—

"You have just drank one glass of liquor belonging to me, to please yourself. You shall now drink another to please me."

Before then any one could interfere, he dashed the fellow's mouth open with a blow of his disengaged hand, and poured the whole glass of hot spirits and water into it.

A general scene of confusion ensued. The man was within an ace of being choked, and several voices cried out to know who the stranger was.

"I am Claude Duval," he said. "Good-night, gentlemen."

The effect of the announcement of the name was quite electric. They all crowded round him now, as though he had been some hero, and the unfortunate 'brick' who wanted to bring him out looked panic-stricken. Again Claude said, "Good-night!" and then one of them cried,—

"What, are you for the road, captain, again to-night?"

"I am," said Claude, "I am."

"A storm is brewing."

"No matter. My vocation is on the road, and there can be no storms of the elements equal to the storm that will at times rage in a man's heart. I do not feel at ease to-night."

At this moment a man entered the room, and whispered to Claude that there was a young lad without, who had a note for him. A cold sensation somehow crept over Claude's heart, and he could not but tell himself at once that there are such things as omens in this world.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL who were present and saw the effect which was produced upon the redoubtable Claude Duval by the mere reception of a letter, could scarcely think it possible that in him they beheld the man who was so proverbially careless of life that a pistol shot was considered as but an ordinary occurrence. They could scarcely comprehend the proposition that there might be the greatest possible amount of physical courage, and yet a large share of what is called nervous feeling.

Duval, or Gentleman Jack, as it will be now more convenient, as well as more proper to call him, heeded not whether his conduct created surprise, censure, applause, or any other feeling. He was completely absorbed in reading the letter which had been placed in his hands.

It was as follows, and was from his sister May.

“CLAUDE,

“Dear Claude, for you are still dear to me, notwithstanding the past, you are called upon solemnly to do an act of justice. Mr. Mark Brereton is falsely accused by Tom Brereton of robbing and attacking him on the highway, and in fact your deeds on Ealing Common, when you stopped the carriage, are sought by Tom Brereton to be fixed upon the innocent Mr. Mark. Remember that Mark is Cicely's brother.

“This is from one who still calls herself

“MAY DUVAL.”

“My horse,” cried Claude, “my horse!”

“In a moment, captain,” cried one, “in a moment; and when you come this way again, don't forget to call here.”

“I will not, you may be assured. I am one who forgets and forgives many injuries, but a kind word sinks deeply into my heart, and is never forgotten. Good night to you all, and good fortune.”

“Three cheers,” shouted one, “three cheers for Gentleman Jack!”

“No, no—oh, no,” said the landlord. “Remember that quietness is security. Don't do it, though if time and place were fitting, there is no one who would stretch his lungs more than I should in such a cause.”

“You are right,” said Jack. Let us have no cheering. I am well pleased to know that I leave friends behind me here.”

“Your horse is ready, captain,” said a man, coming that moment into the room; “but there are two horsemen haunting about the road.”

“Do you know them?”

“No, captain; but they look woundy suspicious, that they do. If you take the path by the coppice at the back of the house, though, you will avoid them.”

“No,” said Claude, “I would not run the chance of avoiding a friend, for fear I should happen to meet an enemy.”

He waved his hand to those who were assembled, and strode to the door. There was a look of gloom upon his brow, although his words had been light and careless, but the sight of his gallant steed pawing the earth with impatience to be off, roused him, and he patted the creature's neck, as he said,—

“Ah! my Sue, you are as fond of the road as your master!”

“She never had such a master until she knew you, captain,” said the landlord.

“And she shall never have another,” responded Claude, as he sprang lightly into the saddle.

“Remember what my man told you about the horsemen,” whispered the landlord. “They bode you no good, you may depend.”

“Thanks, thanks. All is right.”

In another moment Claude darted into the darkness, but when he had got some distance from the public-house, he pulled rein and dismounted, laying his ear flat against the ground, and then he distinctly heard the sound of horses' feet at a gentle walk; and having ascertained that they were coming towards where he was from the direction of London, he mounted again, and at a gentle canter went on his way to meet them.

In the course of a few minutes, the sound of the advancing horses' feet was quite plainly to be heard without anything in the shape of extraordinary vigilance, and then, through the dusky night air, Claude saw those whom he had good reason to suppose his foes advancing.

They, too, must have observed him about the same moment, for, putting their horses to a trot, they came rapidly up to him; and one cried,—

‘Stand, in the king’s name!’

‘Well, what then?’ said Claude.

‘Who are you?’

‘A gentleman. Has the king turned highwayman by deputy, and are you about to attempt to rob me?’

‘You are my prisoner!’ said one of the men, suddenly making a catch at the bridle of Claude’s horse.

‘Paws off, Pompey,’ said Claude, as with the heavily silver-mounted butt end of one of his pistols he struck the man on the back of the hand, putting him to the most exquisite pain.

The other immediately fired a pistol full in Claude’s face, and the bullet actually took up the skin by his cheek so finely, that it looked more like as if he had received a very slight graze than anything else. In fact, at the moment he was perfectly unconscious of having been touched at all, and could hardly in any way account for the bullet missing him.

‘Confound the fellow,’ cried he who had fired the pistol, when he saw that Claude still maintained his seat in the saddle. ‘He is certainly made of cast iron!’

‘Perhaps I am,’ said Claude, as he fired at him; ‘are you?’

The man fell from his horse with a deep groan; and the other cried in loud accents,—

‘Villain, you have murdered the man!’

‘Fortune,’ said Claude. ‘If ever there was in this world an unprovoked attack, it was that made upon me. I only acted upon the defensive. Take care that you don’t fall into the same condition as your friend. I would fain spare you, if I can.’

‘You spare me!’

‘Yes. Beware, I say! Are you drunk or mad that you bar my path, and so tempt me to lay you prostrate? I am not in my usual mood.’

‘I know you. You are the highwayman, Claude Duval. I am John Jeffries, the officer; and I have made up my mind to take you.’

‘You are a gallant fellow!’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I mean that I do not believe there is another officer in England who would say so much to me alone upon a country road. I never take a life, or commit an injury upon any one if I can avoid it. Get out of the path I conjure you, for the sake of yourself and any whom you love.’

‘No, dead or alive I will have you! Take that.’

During this brief dialogue the officer had been quietly pointing a pistol at Claude, and now, as he spoke he pulled the trigger, but the weapon only flashed in the pan, upon which he turned his horse’s head, and tried to escape at full gallop.

‘Indeed,’ said Claude Duval, as he set his teeth. ‘So you are for a race, my friend; so be it. Now, Sue, girl, now.’

‘A touch of the heel of his boot on the flank of the mare, and a slight movement of the rein was all that was required to put Sue to her metal; and off she was like the wind.’

No doubt the man who had thus made so violent an attack upon the life of Claude heard the noise behind him of his pursuer, for his speed evidently increased, and he went on at a break neck pace, while Sue, although gaining upon him, by no means seemed to be doing too much work.

It was a fearful race that which was now taking place between those two men; the one was actuated by the most abject fear for his life, and the other with something of a spirit of revenge.

And yet neither of those passions really belonged to them. In the first place, the officer was a man of decided courage, but when he found that, after making an absolute attempt upon the life of Claude Duval, he was unarmed, he fully expected nothing short of destruction; and the fear of present death will often unman the stoutest heart.

Then, again, as we well know, Claude Duval was not by any means a man of revengeful spirit; but who, in the moment of excited feeling, contingent upon an attack of the nature we have recorded, could help feeling some degree of irritation?

We do not represent Claude other than human, and there are few indeed who would have even commenced the chase as he commenced it, and fewer still who would have ended it as we shall see he ended it—nobly and chivalrously.

Claude had arms, with which, probably, he might have brought the affair to a rapid conclusion, for his aim was almost unerring, but he sufficiently controlled himself not to use them; but with the frightful speed that Sue was capable so easily of making, gained each moment upon the desperate officer.

The only hope which the latter now had of escape consisted in the fact that there was a turnpike gate about a half a mile ahead of him, and he thought that if he could but gain that before he was overtaken by Claude Duval, that the highwayman would hesitate before he committed any deed of blood in the presence of a witness.

Claude well knew the existence of that gate, and resolved in his mind what he should do upon reaching it, although there was little enough time for reflection upon the subject, for in the course of half a minute more, he heard the officer shouting in a loud voice—

“Open the gate—open the gate.”

“Hilloa!” cried the man who had charge of the highway obstruction, “hilloa—who are you?”

“Open the gate at once! I am an officer—open the gate for God’s sake—there is some one behind me.”

A light flashed amid the darkness, and Claude, as Sue flew on like the wind, could see the white rails of the turnpike gate flashing in the dim gloom.

The officer now drew rein, and cried again—

“For God’s sake let me through the gate, and then close it again against Claude Duval, or I am a dead man.

The turnpike-man flung the gate open, exclaiming as he did so—

“You can pass on; but if you think that my gate can keep out Claude Duval, you are much mistaken. What the deuce is he coming after you for?”

The officer darted through the gate, and the man flung it shut again at the moment, and then held up his lantern to see who was really in pursuit of the alarmed officer.

“Now, Sue!” cried Jack.

In another moment she was over the turnpike gate, as lightly as though she had been a feather wafted by the wind!

The officer’s horse was exhausted. He reared, and then making a full plunge, threw its rider on the road, and galloped off full of fright, for it had not been accustomed to the violent manner in which it had been urged to such desperate flight by its rider.

The turnpike-man looked aghast and terrified, and he could not, in the hurry and excitement of the moment, interfere one way or the other, and if Claude Duval had been actuated by the sanguinary feelings which the officer, in his own mind, attributed to him, he might easily have taken his life.

A touch to the rein of Sue brought the faithful and obedient creature to a stand, and Claude dismounted leisurely.

"A short chase," he said.

"W—w—what do you mean, sir?" stammered the turnpike-man.

"Nothing particular."

"Mercy—have mercy on me," said the officer, as stunned and half disabled by his fall, he assumed a crouching position on the ground. "I did but try to do my duty. You would have done as much if you had been in my place. Have mercy upon me as I would upon you."

"Permit me to doubt that," said Claude. "Your mercy upon me would have consisted of a bullet in my brains."

"Oh, no—no——"

"Hush! For your own sake at such an awful moment as this, do not lie!"

As he spoke, Claude took a pistol from his pocket, and approached the officer, who uttered a cry of terror, while the turnpike-man, turning very pale, said—

"You will not murder him on my threshold?"

"You have said it," replied Claude.

And he still approached the officer, until he was near enough to grasp him by the collar, and then, while the trembling wretch was gasping in all the agony of the immediate expectation of death, Claude spoke, in a firm, clear voice—

"You have made a dastardly attempt upon my life, and now you expect me to spare you."

"Mercy—mercy!"

"Did you show any? Prepare yourself for——"

"Death—death!" cried the officer, "death at last!"

"If your pistol had not missed fire, I should have been a dead man now, and therefore, having caught you, I have but a few words to say to you."

The officer fell back and closed his eyes, as he thought, no doubt, upon the world for ever. Heaven and his own heart can only know how fearful were his sufferings during that short space of time. No doubt, if he had committed any evil deeds, they crowded to his recollection, and he suffered much more than the pangs of death could possibly have amounted to.

Claude Duval placed his mouth to his ear, and whispered,—

"When next you meet me take care your powder is dry."

Rising then from his stooping attitude, Duval sprang upon his horse again, and waving his hand to the petrified turnpike-man, he went off towards London at a sharp trot.

For a few moments after he had left them, neither the officer nor the man in charge of the toll-gate moved, but the latter called out,—

"Why, he hasn't killed you."

The officer lay quite motionless upon the ground and made no reply, and when the toll-keeper reached up to him, and examined him by the aid of his lantern, he was astonished and terrified to find his eyes having a fixed appearance while the palid hue of death was on his face.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE will follow Claude to London, where he was doomed to pass through some adventures of most unparalleled audacity and risk.

The chase of the officer had extended far enough up the London road, to shorten the distance that Claude had been from the metropolis considerably, and the first faint gray light of dawn was making its appearance in the east when he entered Oxford-street.

Then he slightly drew rein, so as to reduce the pace of Sue to a walk, instead of the easy canter she had begun at. A shade of care was upon the face of Claude.

"What am I going to do?" he asked himself. "Am I upon the point of making a sacrifice of myself for another, or am I after all doing an act of common justice, which at all risks, all men who have any principle of honor at their hearts are bound to do? Ah, Cicely, Cicely, were it not for you, I think ere now a feeling of despair would come across my heart, and I should fancy the world and all its uses not for me. What shall I do?"

He paused a moment, and it was doubtful just then, whether or not he would persevere in his intention of making an effort to save Markham Brereton; but then he suddenly told himself, that it was not as Markham Brereton that he would try to save him, but as the brother of Cicely, and the mere pronunciation of her name was a spell so potent, that in a minute it banished all his scruples.

"It shall be done," he cried. "It shall be done, at whatever risks, it shall be done."

The dawn came creeping slowly on as he paced down Oxford-street, and as he gazed before him he saw the night-clouds in the east gradually opening to the beams of the great luminary that as yet had not reached the horizon, but sent his rays like the advance guard of an army, to clear the way for the main body and dislodge all minor enemies—then by little and little the shadowy east became lit up by a faint glow of color, at first a gray—then the gray deepened—and here and there a warmer tint crept over the edge of the clouds, many of which, soon after, assumed a purple tint, while a fiery glow shot along the parallel of clouds, and when the space opened, a golden light streamed forth.

Claude Duval gazed upon the beauties of the east, they were no less marked than those of the west, which come like the illumined cover of a great book to close upon the day; now the cover was turning—the giver of all things was opening the book to commence the day—and from it streamed light, and all that brings good to man.

The houses came irregular and at intervals, no sign of life could he see save that here and there a coach-dog opened its deep-toned throat and bayed at the passing stranger, and the cocks from the roost gave clear and shrill notice of the break of day.

He looked upon the dark forms of the houses, many of them much alike, but yet he could not well distinguish them quickly, for the light not being yet strong, he could see those best whose forms soared high and stood in relief against the sun, which was each moment becoming stronger.

Claude Duval had a tolerably fair recollection of the house, in at the window of which he had been received by his sister, on that most eventful morning when he had been so daring as to shake hands with Sixteen-string Jack, and he looked out sharply for it.

Still there were so many houses alike that he might have been rather puzzled but for one circumstance, and that was his observing fluttering from one of the windows of a house a white handkerchief.

"That is it," he said, "May has adopted such a mode of making her house known to me without fear of mistake, and that white emblem is significant



of the innocence and purity of the dwellers in that house. Yes, I will at any risk do what is right."

He halted at the door of the house, and as he cast his eyes up to the window he saw the handkerchief suddenly removed.

"May sees me," he said; "the poor girl has been upon the watch."

Then, as some new thought came across his mind, he knit his brows and muttered,—

"Does she love this Markham Brereton?"

He then strove to recollect every look and every tone of hers while she had been speaking of the brother of Cicely, in order to see if he could come to a conclusion with regard to this new idea of his, but he could not take upon himself to say that he had absolutely seen or heard anything that gave a color to it.

I will say nothing to her on the subject," he thought, "until I know more than I do now concerning it."

At this moment the door of the house opened, and May, covered up in a

gray cloak, so that no one not very intimate with her appearance could have known her, made her appearance.

"Dear Claude," she said, "you have obeyed my summons."

"I have, May, but how you found me I am at a loss to imagine; it is not every one who can pounce upon my whereabouts, as your messenger contrived to do."

"No matter, Claude, no matter. There is ample time for me to explain all that to you, but at present things of far greater moment call for your attention. You must save Markham Brereton."

"Why must I, May?"

He looked as sharply into her face, as he propounded this question, as the dim light enabled him to do, but he could not trace any deepening color or other symptom of a more than just interest in Brereton's fate.

"Because it is just to do so," replied May.

"Am I always treated justly?"

"Perhaps not, Claude; but are you to be wicked because all the rest of the world are not righteous? No, no; I know your nature better, Claude. You would not have come here at all, if you had not meant to do all there was to do. There is an attorney of the name of Hammerston, and you must come with me to him, to tell him confidentially how innocent Markham is."

"An attorney?"

"Yes, but an honest, honorable man, strange as it may appear. Come, Claude, I will walk by the side of your horse."

"Not so," said Claude; "I will lead Sue by the bridle, and walk with you. Is the distance far?"

"Oh, no; it is but a street or two. Oh, Claude, you will not play us false? You will snatch from destruction one whom you know to be innocent?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I will save him if I can. Heaven will not see an innocent man thus perish."

"No, no, it will not," cried May.

"Ah, Claude, something of your better nature still clings to you."

"Did you think it all gone, May?"

"No, no," she sobbed, "I always hoped—always thought that the day would come, when you would forsake your present mode of life and——"

"No more of that—no more of that, May," cried Claude. "What I am I must remain, but you ought to believe that I am still human. Why do you pause?"

"We are now," said May, "at the door of Mr. Hammerston's house."

CHAPTER XIX.

CLAUDE might well pause for a few moments, even now, ere he committed himself so far as to walk into what might still be a snare for him. The street was a solitary and deserted one at all times, and at that early hour of the morning most particularly so, for not a soul was to be seen, although Claude looked both to the right and to the left, anxiously and scrutinizingly. He then, while May knocked timidly and with a degree of uncertainty at the door of the house, fastened the bridle of his gallant steed to the large iron railings in front of it, and calmly awaited the issue of an adventure which was so fraught with peril that few in his situation would have placed themselves in the way to encounter.

May had to repeat her summons several times before a head was projected from one of the windows, and a gruff voice demanded who was there.

"That is you, Mr. Hammerston, I am certain it is you; I know your voice, sir, and I know, likewise, that it will give you pleasure to hear that I can bring you proof of the innocence of Markham Brereton."

"If you can do that," said the attorney, from the window, "I shall not regret having my rest disturbed."

The window was closed, and the head was withdrawn; nothing was spoken between the brother and sister for the next five minutes, after which the attorney opened the door himself, hastily dressed, to welcome his known and unknown visitors.

"Come in, come in," he said; "probably you think you have discovered something which convinces you of his innocence, but which won't convince the laws."

"Oh, do not say so, Mr. Hammerston, do not say so," added May; "even you would be convinced. I bring with me a fearful proof."

The attorney led the way to a small room upon the ground-floor, closely followed by Claude and his sister May. The door was closed, and the high-woman flung himself into a seat which May pointed to him, and the words she seemed disposed to utter died away on her lips.

The window of the apartment looked towards the east, and there was sufficient light already in the glowing morning to enable each of the persons in that small apartment to see each other distinctly, so that there was no need for artificial light; and as Claude sat immediately facing the window, the attorney had an extremely good view of him.

"Why do you not speak?" said Hammerston. "Who is this person you have brought with you?"

"The proof, the proof," gasped May, and she could say no more.

"Hold!" said Claude. "Suffer me to speak. Let me ask you, sir, is Mr. Markham Brereton accused by his cousin, Mr. Tom Brereton, of any crime?"

"Yes," said the attorney, a highway robbery, and the whole affair has placed me in a most embarrassing position, being as I am, the attorney for the family, all parties come to me, and now that the Breretons may be considered as a house divided against itself, I really don't know what to do among them."

"I do not ask, sir," added Claude, "from idle curiosity, but I would fain know upon what grounds Mr. Markham Brereton is accused by his cousin?"

"Simply these. Tom Brereton states that the first arrangement was for the whole family, consisting of himself, Markham Brereton, the old lady, and Cicely, to come to town together in the family coach, but that Markham Brereton for no ostensible reason in the world, must needs go on in advance on horseback, and that he, Tom, having in his pocket all the necessary documents to prove who and what he was, felt naturally anxious concerning them, but important as the possession of those documents were to Markham Brereton, he little suspected any attempt from that quarter to deprive him of them."

"Nor was there any," exclaimed May.

"Allow Mr. Hammerston to proceed," said Claude.

"Tom Brereton then goes on to state," continued the lawyer, "that somewhere about Ealing Common, the carriage was stopped by a disguised horseman, and those very papers stolen from him, he having every reason to suspect such disguised horseman was no other than Markham Brereton, and that the terror of Mrs. Brereton and Cicely was only affected."

"And the result of all this," said Claude.

"The result is that Markham Brereton is now in Newgate."

"Impossible!"

"True, nevertheless, and if his cousin chooses to swear to his identity, he will find it an extremely difficult matter to escape the accusation."

"And yet," said May, "he is innocent."

"Completely innocent," echoed Claude. "This accusation is the most monstrous thing I ever heard of."

"An assertion of his innocence is of little moment," said Mr. Hammerston: "have you proof?"

May looked anxiously at her brother, and after a few moments' silence, Claude spoke.

"Sir," he said, "I have good proof—such proof as I think even you will admit to be irrefragible. I am about to place a confidence in you which may appear to be indiscreet, but I am solemnly called upon to save an innocent man, and I am here to respond to the appeal. Tom Brereton was stopped and robbed near Ealing Common upon the occasion to which he refers, and documents of importance were taken from him, but not by Mr. Markham Brereton."

"By whom then?—that is the question."

"A question easily answered. I was his assailant."

"You—and is it possible you come here, exposing yourself to frightful danger—"

"No sir, I never expose myself to frightful danger; neither you nor I need suffer a momentary pang of disquietude. I can protect myself, and the same feelings that brought me to this house, will save me from becoming the easy prey of treachery."

The attorney drew a long breath, as he looked anxiously at Claude, and added, in a low tone,—

"Have you any objection to tell me who you are?"

"Not in the least. I am Claude Duval."

The attorney's chair ran upon castors, and at the mention of the well-known name of Claude Duval, he backed it precipitately until he reached the wall.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, "I see before me the—the—the—notorious highwayman?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I am he. I was on Ealing Common on the night in question, and you may come to a safe conclusion as to whether I or Mr. Markham Brereton stopped the carriage. I see sir, that you bend looks of surprise and distrust upon this young lady; you know her by the name of May Russel, and as the companion of Cicely Brereton; her real name is Duval, she is my sister, and remember sir, that this is a secret confided to your honor."

"I am all amazement," said Mr. Hammerston, "and in the wildest suppositions, even in my dreams, I could never have expected to see Claude Duval in this apartment."

At this moment a door, but not the one through which the attorney had brought his guests, suddenly flew open, precipitating some one who had been incautiously leaning against it to listen, into the apartment. Claude sprang from his seat in an instant, and seized the intruder by the collar, exclaiming as he did so—

"Do you keep spies, sir, on your premises?"

"In faith, no," said the attorney, "but this is my articulated clerk, and I assure you I had no more idea that he was without, than you had. Samuel Spark, how came you to leave your bed at such an hour? It's a hard case to get you up in anything like reasonable time when you are required for actual business."

"Have mercy upon me," said Samuel Spark, "I was passing the door as aforesaid, and accidentally touching the pannel, it gave way as herein before stated; I have heard nothing, and know nothing, in and whereby, and nevertheless, and notwithstanding—"

"Let me beg him off," said Mr. Hammerston, "he is harmless enough."

"As you please, sir," said Claude, and he released the affrighted clerk, "such persons, however, are full of mischief; at your intercession I release him, but I anticipate danger."

Samuel made his way from the room, looking heartily rejoiced at his escape, and the attorney again assured Claude that he need be under no sort of apprehension.

The latter, however, did not appear to share the confidence of the attorney, but kept a wary eye around him, during the continuance of the interview.

"In what way, sir," he said, "can I save this falsely-accused gentleman, and at the same time preserve myself from the hangman's hands?"

"I own myself puzzled," said Mr. Hammerston, "it is a question that deserves and requires serious consideration, and I must not give a precipitate answer; you have doubtless established some mode of communication between yourself and your sister, so that without your endangering your safety by coming here again, I can through her communicate with you."

"Be it so," said Claude, rising, "and if this is to be my last exploit, it will not be a dishonorable one; I shall not have in vain preserved what you, my sister, I presume will call a remnant of virtue."

"Oh, Claude, Claude!"

May burst into tears, and flung herself upon her brother's neck, sobbing with a convulsive energy that sufficiently showed how highly wrought must have been her feelings. Mr. Hammerston was affected, and took a huge pinch of snuff, which he pretended made him sneeze ferociously.

"Calm yourself," said Claude, "calm yourself."

"Can you ask me?"

"Yes, and wish it too. Why you were once one of the most courageous of girls."

"I was, but that was when I felt no shame in——"

"Let me complete the sentence for you—in your brother."

"Well, really," put in Mr. Hammerston, "this is a most distressing affair. I must say that it has altogether taken me so much by surprise, that it seems more like a dream to me than anything else. Could you not make it convenient, Mr. Duval, to alter your mode of life?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried May, with frantic energy, "urge him upon that point, sir, and may the eloquence of an angel hang upon your words."

"No, no—forbear!" said Claude, "forbear!"

"Do not forbear," cried May, "to urge him upon such a point. Claude, Claude! you know not who are your best friends. Do you fancy there is no room for reformation, because you have hitherto carried on a reckless career? Oh, sir, speak to him, your voice may be more potent than mine."

Claude Duval waved his hand to bespeak silence, and then, in a voice which commanded attention, he said—

"Hear me, once and for all. I cannot and do not for one moment deny but that I am pursuing a desperate course—a course which must end in my destruction—nor am I disposed to doubt the purity of the intentions of those who would dissuade me from it; but I have learned a truth in my intercourse with the world, which both of you seem to be ignorant of, and that is, if you make one deviation from the ordinary routine of correct living, you are lost. Do you think that I, the notorious Claude Duval, a man whose name has become a terror and a by-word, could ever be received among the smooth-tongued hypocrites of society on a footing with themselves? No; I say, emphatically, it is too late, by far too late. I have taken a step from which there is no redemption, and although I might humiliate myself, I cannot save myself."

"These words are terrible," said May.

"Truth frequently partakes of that character," added Claude.

There was a slight pause, and then, before any one could make another remark, the highwayman sprung to his feet, and assumed an attitude of listening.

CHAPTER XX.

THE listening attitude assumed by Claude soon found imitators in May, and Mr. Hammerston, the attorney; they heard nothing, but, as their eyes were directed towards Duval, for an explanation, he spoke—

My ears," he said, "are accustomed to catch slight sounds; it may or may not be a matter of any moment, but I distinctly heard the creeping of footsteps in the passage, and wherever I have found secrecy and caution, I have likewise generally found danger."

"You surprise me," said the lawyer, "indeed, I am convinced that no one is up in the house but myself."

"You forget your clerk, and as yet we know not what he may have listened to."

"That is true; and yet I hardly think he would dare—he's one of the most timid of men——"

"And therefore," said Claude, "one of the most dangerous. I tell you frankly, sir, that my impression is, that he has overheard most of what has passed in this room, and, among the rest, the all important fact of whom I am. I regret this, as it may produce confusion and bloodshed in your house."

"Bloodshed?"

"Yes. Do you think I am going to be taken while I have arms in my possession? No, sir; woe be to those who have temerity sufficient to stop my progress."

"What is to be done—what is to be done?" cried May. "I did not bring you here, Claude, to expose you to danger. Mr. Hammerston, I call upon you to protect him; it is in some measure your duty so to do. He has come under your roof trustfully, and it is your duty, sir, to see him depart unharmed."

The attorney stood irresolute, and seemed somewhat confounded by what was passing around him. After a few moments, however, he recovered himself.

"Hush—hush!" he said, "for God's sake don't speak so loud. I will soon ascertain if there be any danger—remain here in peace, and expect my return in a few moments, and above all things, do not harbor the remotest idea of my playing you false. I should detest myself if I were to do so, as well as consider I should rightly earn the detestation of every honest man."

With these words, he left the apartment, and during his brief absence not a word passed between Claude and May—they were both far too intent upon listening for the attorney's return, to indulge in any conversation which might have the effect of preventing the mfrom hearing the first indication of his approach. At length he came into the room, and his pale face showed that something must have happened to discompose him greatly. He trembled as he closed the door hastily behind him, and turned the key in the lock.

"You are right—you are right," he said, "and probably in an emergency like this you can best say what it will be desirable to do."

"I guessed as much," said Claude. "Now, sir, tell me the precise danger."

"Back and front, the house is guarded by men who are no doubt anxious to claim the reward for your apprehension."

"And your clerk?"

"Is on the step of the front door, rubbing his hands in glee, in anticipation of his share of the profits."

"On the step," mused Claude, "on the step. Is he close to the door—could a hand stretched out grasp him think you?"

"Unquestionably it might, as I saw him. There is a small window, as

you must have observed when you first came here, on each side of the door, and through one of those it was that I saw him."

"It is necessary," said Claude, calmly, "that I should speak to him; probably I shall be able to make terms with him—wait for me one moment, the attempt is worth the making."

"Oh, no, Claude," cried May, "you will not be so mad as to venture into the street; recollect that although you may succeed in taking several lives, that fresh enemies will momentarily crowd around you, and you cannot resist a multitude—he merciful to me, and rush not into danger—Claude, Claude, I pray you be not over reckless——"

"Time is precious, sister, each moment is of more vast importance than its predecessor. You are desirous of but one thing, and that is, I should save myself. Permit me, from my more extended experience to judge what is the best mode of accomplishing that object. Be tranquil for the present."

There was such a tone of command about Claude, as he uttered these words, that May did not dream of resisting them, and as for Mr. Hammerston he looked on with the air of a man who was so bewildered by the rapidity of passing events, as to find it alike impossible to stem the current, or thoroughly comprehend all that it was significant of.

Claude then did not hesitate another moment, but leaving the room walked rapidly to the street door, where he made it his first business to inspect the fastenings, and having satisfied himself that they might have been securely put up within the smallest possible space of time—he no longer hesitated about what he meant to do. Opening the door a short distance, he said in a whisper—

"Hist, Hist! are you there?"

"Yes, yes," cried the clerk, who was so anxious to serve him so scurvy a trick, and rushing forward he presented himself at the aperture with eagerness.

To stretch out his arm and grasp him by the collar, and drag him into the passage, as though he had come suddenly under the influence of tremendous velocity, was to Claude the work of a moment, and then the street door was closed again, and a chain and bar appended to it, before the bewildered individual exactly knew where he was.

"Murder, murder!" he cried, but Claude clapped his hand upon his mouth, with an energy that loosened all his teeth, as he said—

"I would strongly recommend silence."

Hurrying him then along the passage, he passed in another moment, to the astonishment of Mr. Hammerston, into the apartment which he, Claude, had so recently quitted.

"Gracious Heavens!" said the attorney, "is that you, Samuel?"

"Yes," said Samuel, "and I'm a dead man. Oh, sir, I didn't mean to do anything. I've not the least idea that you are Claude Duval, the great highwayman, and as for catching you, sir, that never came into my mind."

"And yet," said Claude, "you have caught something, if it's only a Tartar."

"Spare him," said Mr. Hammerston, "he is three parts of a fool."

"And the fourth a rogue," said Claude, "but it is no business of mine to care what he is, and as to putting out the small light of his existence, I should take shame to myself for the attempt."

"Thank you, sir, oh, thank you," said Samuel. "I'm too contemptible, sir, and always was. I've been kicked five times, and pumped upon twice, if you please, and I have quite lost count of how many times my nose has been pulled."

Claude Duval looked at the animal before him, for some moments with an expression of undisguised contempt; and even May, gentle and indulgent as she was to all the faults of humanity, shrunk with something like contempt, from the contemplation of such a specimen of human nature.

"Ah," said Mr. Hammerston. "I certainly had not the very highest opin-

ion of your courage, but what you state of yourself now, transcends whatever I should have imagined. Is it possible you can be so debased; at the same time, Mr. Duval, I hope," added the attorney, turning to Claude, "I hope that you will not put yourself out of the way to exercise any vengeance upon such a person as this."

"Not in the least, not in the least," said Claude, "I thank God I cannot accuse myself of having taken vengeance on any one, but I can truly say that I have had forbearance where few would have had it; and where attacks have been made on my very existence, I passed them over lightly, as though they were nothing, conceiving as I did that the line of life I was leading specially called upon me to run such risks; be under no apprehension, therefore, sir, that I shall exceed moderation in dealing with such a man as this."

"In spite of my reason," said the attorney, "in spite of my profession, in spite of all my prejudices, you win upon me, Claude Duval. I am sorry for it, but I cannot help it."

"Say no more," interrupted Claude, "time is precious."

"Then you ain't a-going to do anything to me," whined Samuel, "then you ain't a-going to do anything to me?"

"Upon one condition," said Claude, "you are safe."

"Oh, sir, name it—name it, what am I to do? Am I to tell you who is waiting for you, and how to get the better of them—only say what I am to do, and I'll do it in a moment."

"And so betray the very people," interposed Mr. Hammerston, "you have given notice to of Claude Duval's presence here."

"I do not ask him so much," said Claude, "my question is a simple one, if he answer it not the consequences be upon his own head."

"Oh, speak—speak, sir," cried Samuel; "I'll answer it as if I were on my death-bed, and a respectable clergyman was called to hear my last dying-speech and confession, only speak, sir, and I'll answer you in a moment."

"You'll have little trouble," said Claude, with a sneer of contempt. "Where's my horse, that is the only question I have to ask?"

There was a silence for a moment, and then the clerk, in a whining tone, replied:

"He was taken to a livery stable on the other side of the way, and they were told not to give him up unless a gentleman of the name of Park came for him."

"And who is Park?"

"A constable, he lives in the next street, and when I heard that you were here I thought I'd run and get him."

"I'm obliged truly; and now, Samuel, I wish you to stand up, for I wish to see how tall you are. You look a long, shambling, ill put together piece of goods, and I want to see if you are near enough my height to be for once mistaken for a better man than you are."

Samuel stood up with fear upon his countenance, he was trembling in every limb, but by a significant nod Claude Duval seemed to say that he was satisfied, and turning to the attorney he said:

"I believe, sir, you justly consider you are under sufficient durance by my presence here, as not to be able to oppose what I may choose to dictate?"

These words were accompanied by a side glance at Samuel, which sufficiently informed Mr. Hammerston they were intended to provide against any ulterior consequences that might arise from his aiding and assisting him in escaping the fangs of the law, and Mr. Hammerston fully understood the side glance, replying judiciously at once to it by saying:

"I am acting entirely under durance, and therefore cannot be accused of comforting and abetting a felon. What is it you wish, Mr. Duval?"

"A coil of rope, if you have such a thing."

"In the upper part of the house I think we may accommodate you."

Claude nodded, and then taking a grasp of Samuel's arm, which to that individual felt extremely like as if he had been suddenly caught in a vice,

conducted him from the apartment, followed by the attorney, into one of the upper rooms of the place, then taking Mr. Hammerston aside, Claude let him know what were his intentions, and as they will best show themselves in their progress and result, we shall proceed to detail them.

The attorney pointed to a small flight of stairs which led to the roof of the house, and at the same time produced from a cupboard a small coil of rope which at various times had been used for the purpose of cording trunks and other heavy packages.

Claude still kept a firm hold upon the arm of Samuel, and so conducted the trembling coward up the flight of steps, closely followed by May and Mr. Hammerston, who were curious and excited spectators of his proceedings.

By this time it may well be supposed that the morning had made progress, and indeed a clear and distinct light had broken in upon all surrounding objects—the haze of twilight having completely disappeared; thus it was that Claude knew very well that any object from the roof the house would become a very clear and distinct point of observation. He took the coil of rope in his hand, and made his way to the parapet, and looked over into the street.

A loud shout from the officer to whom the alarm had been given of his presence in the house, sufficiently testified to the fact that he was seen, and then in that direction his object was accomplished, proceeding then to the back of the house which looked into some mews, he made a similar transient appearance and was greeted by another shout, then he turned to Samuel and spoke in a low but decisive tone.

"I cannot disguise from you but your position is one of danger, that is, provided you but make the smallest resistance to what I require of you; if you do not you are perfectly safe."

"Save my life," said Samuel, "save my life, but take all my property. Oh, good God, you are surely not going to hang me. Oh, Mary Ann, Mary Anne, what will you do on Sunday afternoon."

This remark about hanging arose, probably, from the fact that Claude had made, with great rapidity, a sort of running noose at the end of the coil of rope; he returned no answer to Samuel, but flung it over him, and drawing it tightly under his arms, and then dragging him to the verge of the parapet of the house, he said:

"One advantage of a light weight is that a slight cord will suffice as a support. Now, Samuel, by your own confession, you are used to being kicked, but probably those operations have been used to be performed upon level ground; circumstances constrain me to introduce a variety in the performance of that operation—I am now about to kick you off the roof of a house."

Samuel was too much dismayed to answer, and Claude Duval had fairly wrapped round the terrified clerk his coat, and placed upon his head the rakish looking hat, before poor Samuel could come to any conclusion as to what was to be the object of such a transformation.

In another moment he was launched over the parapet and dangling by the rope.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried the officers from below, "here he comes, call all the fellows from the front, we'll have him, hurrah! hurrah!"

Claude continued to let down Samuel until he was about half-way—he then fastened the other end of the rope to some beams that were close at hand, and still preserving his stooping posture, so that he could not be seen from below, he spoke to May and to Mr. Hammerston:

"I do not wish," he said, "that even such a person as Samuel should run any great risk for my safety's sake, nor do I think he will by dangling there for a few minutes, during which time if he be mistaken for me by virtue of my hat and coat, my object will be accomplished, and now, May, look over the parapet and tell me if the officers are congregating at the back of the house."

With anxious eagerness May obeyed the trembling behests of her brother, for she began to comprehend exactly how it was intended to effect his escape, and that he should succeed became to her a chief and prime object of existence.

Soon as she withdrew from the parapet she informed Claude that nine men had assembled at the back of the house, and that the front of the house was quite clear. She urged him to fly for his life. He bade a hurried farewell to May and Mr. Hammerston, and darted down the staircase. He well recollected how his gallant steed had been disposed of, and glancing opposite, where the open gateway of a livery-stable stared him in the face, he made but little doubt but there he should find the object of his solicitude. A man was lounging at the entrance, and to him Claude gave half-a-crown, saying—

“Mr. Park has sent me for the brown mare.” It was brought, and Claude, with a sudden movement, sprang into the saddle. “But as Park may not be quite sure which of his men it is, I may as well leave my name.” “Confound your impudence, you have splashed me all over with mud! What the devil is your name?”

“Stand clear, woa, lass—woa,” said Claude, as Sue gave two or three curveting bounds. “So you want to know my name, do you? Well, it’s a slight matter to oblige you in, and I should be sorry you should be dissatisfied; you can tell Park, when you see him, that my name is Claude Duval.”

The livery stable keeper staggered back until the wall stopped his progress.

“To the road,” cried Claude. “Once more, my Sue, let us smell the soft air of hedge-rows and meadows, let us listen, my lass, to the soft music of the clustering foliage—hurrah, hurrah, for the road!”

The horse seemed to catch a portion of the rider’s spirit, and although the gallop was subdued into a canter, still onward they went, at a pace few would have attempted to rival.

Green fields and tall trees, soon met the grateful sight of Claude, and the town, where he never entered but from sheer necessity, and never left but with gladness, gradually disappeared behind him.

CHAPTER XXI.

CLAUDE galloped on, until he had left far behind him the canopy of smoke that hangs like an evil dispensation over London. The morning was advancing—birds went twittering from tree to tree, and there was about the air that wild, fragrant freshness, which is so grateful to the senses of all who have not become actually callous to all that is beautiful and natural.

It was not for some time that Claude began to notice how low the birds were flying, and that, although the morning was evidently advancing, it more resembled the coming on of night, for a deep gloom began to gather over the face of nature, and then when he scanned the heavens, standing as high as he could in the saddle, to stretch his gaze far and near, he saw that masses of heavy clouds had piled themselves up, and a low rumbling sound of thunder, announced to him that some war of the elements was about to ensue.

“A storm—a storm!” he cried. “We must seek some shelter, Sue.”

He had branched off from the western road, considerably to the right, so that the low neighborhood of Kilburn, Wilsden, and Neasdon, was close to him.

This district, however, seemed to be pregnant with disagreeable associations, for Claude turned his horse’s head, and again made for the Uxbridge Road.

By this time, however, the storm had begun to do its worst. Vivid flashes

of lightning darted from cloud to cloud, and the thunder, although not remarkable for loudness, was almost incessant. Occasionally too, a deluge of rain would come, and then as suddenly cease; so that the state of external affairs was about as disagreeable as could be for a horseman, who had so little to protect him as Claude. No wonder then, that an anxious desire for shelter soon found a home in his breast, and upon gaining an eminence on the western road, and which commanded a view of it, he glanced around him with a hope of finding some habitation, where with safety he might remain, at all events until the worst fury of the tempest was over.

While thus occupied, he observed a couple of horsemen, well dressed and mounted, but perfectly bedraggled with mud, slowly emerge from a green lane, from the opposite side of the road. Their attention seemed to be directed to something which was following them, and presently a small, closely shut-up coach made its appearance, driven by a boy, from whom the rain was pouring in torrents. One of the horsemen made an impatient gesture with his riding-whip, to hurry on; but the horse appeared to be exhausted by dragging the vehicle, small as it was, through the deep clay of the lane, and would not proceed but at an ordinary jog-trot pace.

Another object was soon added to the group, and that consisted of the Uxbridge wagon creeping on slowly towards its destination, through the mire that lay at least a foot thick in the road.

Claude might well wonder what all this meant, and as from the favorable position he occupied, he was an easy spectator of what was going on, he resolved for a few minutes to notice how the various parties would dispose of themselves.

The two horsemen noticed the wagon, and then after a brief consultation they spoke to the boy who drove the vehicle, after which, dismounting from their horses, they had their bridles fastened to the tail of the wagon, and then ingloriously took shelter beneath its capacious canopy, and the whole affair proceeded like a procession, the carriage that the boy was driving, bringing up the rear.

Claude's curiosity was strongly excited; he was quick at resolves, and in a few moments made up his mind what to do, as an adventure of any kind, under the present circumstances, would he thought tend greatly to withdraw his mind from a too keen perception of matters which otherwise pressed heavily upon his spirits. He took a flying gallop along the meadows, until he reached a point of the road about half a mile higher than the wagon, and there he awaited its slow arrival beneath the spreading branches of a lime, which in some slight degree saved him from the fury of the now rapidly descending rain.

Slow as was the pace of the wagon, but a very short time had elapsed before it had reached the point of the road at which Claude had stationed himself; he then trotted out, and the driver seeing a mounted man, stopped his team, when Claude propounded to him a desire for a similar accommodation to that which had been accorded to the two horsemen who had so snugly ensconced themselves in the vehicle.

The only difficulty that presented itself to the carrying out of this request consisted in the attachment of a third horse by its bridle to the back of the wagon, but that trouble was soon overruled by Claude, who in a few moments more found himself an inmate of the cumbrous machine, which performed its periodical journeys between Uxbridge and London.

The rain continued to descend in torrents, so that every available piece of canvass was so placed as to exclude it; and this had the effect of course of considerably darkening the interior of the vehicle. Indeed it was some minutes before Claude, suddenly coming in out of the daylight, could distinguish one object from another; but at length the forms of the various persons began to be dimly perceptible to him, and ensconcing himself in the straw as well and quietly as he could he listened to a conversation which was pending the moment he entered.

"Highwaymen, madam," said a somewhat affected male voice; "highwaymen—oh, certainly, I have met highwaymen in my time, but I always give them such a warm reception that they don't wish to meet me again."

"Well," said an elderly lady, who was surrounded by an immense number of packages, "well, there's one comfort in travelling, at all events; you are not likely to have your throat cut or your pocket picked."

"There, my dear madam, said the former speaker, "you are quite wrong; for if any highwayman were to see my horse, which is attached to the tail of this wagon, he would at once guess there was a gentleman who had something to lose; and then there is no knowing what the consequences would be, that is, if it was anybody but myself, for I make short work of these things."

"Well, that's a comfort," said the old lady.

"Oh, you've no notion, ma'am, how often I've had brushes of this kind. I believe I may truly say that for several months I drove the well-known Claude Duval off the western marshes."

"You don't say so, sir?"

"Yes, it is a fact. I was travelling on horseback, and heard a cry of distress near midnight. The cry was in a female voice, and of course that was enough for me. I clapped spurs to my horse and galloped on, when what should I see but two young ladies and an old gentleman being robbed by a mounted highwayman."

"But how could you see, sir, at night?" said the old lady.

"He had his spectacles with him, madam," said Claude.

"Eh? Who dared speak to me in such a way? Who was it that made that dreadfully audacious remark? Of course I saw very well, for the moon just peeped from a cloud at that moment, and enabled me to do so."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Claude, "pray go on, sir; I long to hear the rest of the story."

"Very good; if anybody begs my pardon, that's enough—otherwise—but no matter. Well, as I was saying, I galloped up, when the fellow called out to me, 'Stand off, or take the consequences—I'm Claude Duval.'

"'Are you?' said I, 'what's that to me, when I hear the voice of a female in distress?' That was the way I spoke to him, do you see, when what did he do but pull out a large horse-pistol and fired it at me, blowing my left whisker all to atoms. I grappled with him, and down he went; so I made him beg pardon of the old gentleman, and the two young ladies, and likewise of me, which he did upon his knees in the mud; and ever after that, he was so afraid of my being upon the road, that he scarcely touched anybody for a month."

"But perhaps it was not the celebrated highwayman," said Claude.

"Oh, yes, it was. I made him write his name upon the fly-leaf of my pocket-book, and I have got it here; besides, my friend here, Mr. Smithers, knows its all a fact."

"Why, yes," said the boaster's companion, "yes, it's all right enough."

"May I ask, gentlemen," said Claude, "what sort of wild beast you've got in the coach at the back?"

"What's that to you, sir? We are upon duty, charitable duty, too—and if you must know, we are conveying an insane young lady into the country."

By the rustling of paper, Claude could well perceive that the fellow was endeavoring to substantiate his story of the meeting with the highwayman, by actually writing the name of Claude Duval.

Claude had now an opportunity, as the weather cleared a little, of seeing exactly how many persons were in the wagon, and he found they consisted of a quiet working man who had not spoken, two young females who had not yet spoken, and the two men who now admitted to the nature of the contents of the single horse carriage driven by the boy.

He made his determination in a moment, and rising from the corner in which he had ensconced himself, he said,

"I shall never believe that story of the highwayman, unless I really see his name in your pocket book, sir."

"There it is, then," said the fellow—and he handed Claude a leaf which he tore out, and on which was written, in great, scrawling characters, "Claude Duval."

"A forgery!" cried Claude.

"A what? a forgery! how do you know?—that is to say, how dare you?"

"Of my daring you shall soon have proof, and as regards my means of knowing, I ought to be the best witness in the world; I deliberately declare, I never wrote these words."

"You never wrote——"

"Certainly not, and yet I am Claude Duval, the highwayman!"

The old lady uttered a shriek, the younger ones looked deeply interested; the friend of the gentleman who had told the boasting anecdote had contrived in a moment to hide himself completely among the straw, while the individual who had committed himself by such open and unadvised speaking, seemed for a moment paralyzed with terror, then recovering himself, he shouted,—

"Murder! murder! stop the wagon—stop the wagon! Murder! murder!"

"Yes," cried Claude, springing to his feet; "stop the wagon, and there may be murder, too, if you will have it."

The wagoner, hearing the confused sounds and cries of alarm from within his vehicle, stopped the horses, upon which Claude called out to him,—

"Hark, you wagoner, you must do as your betters have done under similar circumstances—be quiet for your safety's sake. I am Claude Duval, and whether you've heard the name or not before, matters little; I have but to warn you that your safety lies in submission."

"Oh, help, help!" cried the old lady; "we shall all be dead in two minutes. Fire—fire."

"How interesting!" said one of the young ladies.

"And not at all a bad looking man," said the other.

"Ladies," interposed Claude, "be under no alarm; it is certain I am Claude Duval, and it is equally certain that I feel indignation at the vile fabrication concerning me which has passed the lips of a person in this company. That indignation, however, has its sole foundation in the mistatement that I was attacking two ladies and an elderly gentleman. No such circumstance occurred as my meeting this person on the road, but since he is anxious to have an anecdote of Claude Duval, he will be most abundantly gratified."

"Spare my life," said the man. "Spare my life, it was only a joke; there's my purse; ladies, ladies, give up all you've got quietly, don't make any resistance, or we shall be murdered. I assure you, sir, it was only a joke."

"Well," said Claude, "we will take it as a joke, and end it as one. I must however, have my little jest as well as you yours, and now, sir, for fear you should show this little scrap of paper to any one else as the hand-writing of Claude Duval, I will trouble you to swallow it?"

"Swallow it? did you say swallow?"

"I did."

"Oh, Lord, but you don't mean it. Why, it's an uncommonly stiff bit of paper. I could not do it. Help, help! Oh, dear. I can't and won't."

"You can and will."

"Oh no, no. Young ladies say a word for me. Good, kind young ladies, don't let me be murdered before your eyes."

"These young ladies," said Claude, "are too beautiful to interest themselves in such a person as you are. Besides, they know very well that the swallowing of a small piece of paper will not be the death of you. If you will not by fair means go through the ceremony you must by foul, and I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of ramming it down your throat with the barrel of a pistol."

As he uttered these words, Claude handed the paper to the vain boaster and after a little further reluctance, he made it up into as small a size as he

could, and fairly swallowed it, to the great amusement of the younger ladies, and the great alarm of the elder one, who thought to be sure that choke he must.

"Now," said Claude, "you may pursue your journey. The storm is over, and I no longer require the shelter of the vehicle. But beware how you again trifle with my name, for I may not always be in the humor to make a jest of it, as I have done to-day. Ladies, for any alarm that I have given you, I beg you ten thousand pardons."

"Oh, we are not at all alarmed," said one.

"Oh, dear no," cried the other.

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so," added Claude, "and now suffer me to bid you good day, and to wish you a pleasant journey."

As he went down the wagon he purposely trod upon the cowardly passenger, who had hidden himself in the straw, and a howl of pain succeeded.

"I was not aware that any curs were in the wagon," remarked Claude, and then after a hearty kick he left the fellow, and sprung into the road, where Sue was with some degree of impatience, awaiting the arrival of her master, and in her way testified her joy at seeing him.

The value Claude set upon his steed was so great, that pleasure always beamed from his face, when after a brief period of absence, he patted the neck of the beautiful animal.

"My Sue," he said, "we must be away to more stirring adventures, we are not doing the kind of business which will suit us. Come, my noble creature, let us to the road once more."

Claude was about to mount, when he suddenly recollected that he had expressed an intention of seeing who was really the occupant of the one horse carriage that had been under the escort of the two persons so signally defeated by him in the wagon, and yet he hesitated a moment, for he dreaded lest he might be haunted by some pale spectral looking face, devoid of speculation. It was but the impulse of a moment and he might have been off, but his feelings run the other way, and he strode to the door of the vehicle.

The boy who drove the carriage, hearing or seeing that something was amiss, was crouching down in an attitude of fear on the driver's seat, the blinds were closely drawn of the vehicle, and the handle of the door seemed to be secured in some way, so that Claude was obliged to use force to get it open.

When he did so, the bright light of day shone into the carriage, and there he saw a female form apparently prostrated by grief, for the face was hidden by the hands, and deep sobs burst from the laboring breast.

"Fear nothing," cried Claude, "if you have been persecuted, I am not one of your persecutors."

At the sound of his voice, there came a shriek from the lips of the unknown, the hands were withdrawn from before the sweetest face the world ever gazed upon.

It was Cicely Brereton.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIS most sudden and unexpected appearance of Cicely came upon Claude with all the stunning effect of an apparition. Full as were his thoughts now continually of her, he would have as soon expected to see again in life his own father, as at such a time and at such a place, to look upon the face of her who was his best beloved.

Joy, surprise, aye even fear, for at one moment he thought that he must be going mad, and nothing but a deranged fancy could have raised up such an apparition, struggled for mastery in his countenance.

But if surprise during this species of mental excitement were visible upon the countenance of Claude, how acutely were those feelings reflected in the face of Cicely. She too looked for a few moments like one newly awakened from a dream, but yet she was the first to break the spell of silence, which had fallen upon them both.

"Save me—save me, Claude Duval. Save me and protect me," she cried "Indeed I am not mad."

"Protect you," he shouted, "aye, with my life; tell me who has dared to place you in this position?"

"I know not. Except that our cousin Tom Brereton has something to do with it. Save me I implore you, do not let them drag me to a mad-house. As the thought is too—too horrible."

"Be at peace, be at peace, Cicely, there is no danger. I am here to protect you."

"But you know not your foes—they are armed with what they call authority to drag me to a civil death. Oh, if you would save me, take me to some place of safety."

Claude Duval knew sufficient of the world to be quite aware that the most frightful and notorious iniquities were enacted under the mask of authority, and in conformity to the precepts of the law, and although he felt that while Cicely was dependent upon him for protection, he was actuated by a thousand impulses, still he felt that all he could do was to die in her cause, and as to live in it, was a far more blessed condition, he determined upon hastening from the spot and seeking an asylum, where at least he might have the dear felicity of talking to her alone, and perhaps even in those moments of dread and danger, telling her how truly he loved her.

He passed from the vehicle in the direction of the wagon, and then he saw that the two persons, over whom he had obtained so recent and signal a victory, had clambered up a steep bank upon the side of the road, and were waving their hats, as though they saw some assistance near at hand.

There was not a moment to be lost, Claude shut the door of the vehicle, and secured it as well as he was able under spur of the moment, and then springing upon the coach-box he took the boy by the collar and placed him in the road as gently as was consistent with rapidity. Again then reaching terra firma he sprang upon the back of his own horse, and with his right hand grasping the bridle of the animal that drew the chaise, he went off at a quick pace, forcing it to a speed which in truth it was seldom in the habit of exerting.

This was a state of things, however, which could not last, for not only was it extremely inconvenient both to Sue and to Claude, to be thus yoked as it were to the animal in the chaise, but it was quite evident the latter could not keep up anything like speed which was failing each moment.

Claude paused, and raising himself in his stirrups took a long view around him. A pang, perhaps the first he had ever felt, shot across his heart, as he saw in the distance about a dozen horsemen, headed, he felt convinced, by the two persons he had already so signally discomfited, making after him at a rapid pace.

The chace would have been a short one under its present circumstances, but Claude was both fertile in devising expedients, and rapid in carrying out the suggestions of his ingenious fancy.

"For once, my Sue, you must carry double, and you will feel but little inconvenience from the light and sylph-like form of her whom you must take in addition to your usual load."

Once again he sought the carriage door, and having opened it, he said in tones of emotion:

"Miss Brereton, there are many pursuing us, and I am but one. I could die in your defence, but then you would be without an arm to protect you. I think you would rather fly with me to a place of safety than await the issue of so desperate a conflict."

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried Cicely, "a thousand times over."

For the first time Claude Duval clasped that lovely form to his heart, and even at the moment he could not help asking himself, what he had done to deserve so much happiness—placing her then as gently and tenderly as a mother would her babe, upon his steed, he sprung up behind her; echoing the words of the old romance, he cried in tones of joyous exultation:

"Away, away my love, they'll have fleet steeds who follow."

For a moment Sue gave a curvetting bound, Claude touched the generous creature lightly on the neck, its ears were thrown back, its nostrils expanded, and off it flew with its double burden like the wind.

Fright no doubt induced poor Cicely to cling closer to Claude Duval than she otherwise would have done, but he would not have exchanged the joy of that embrace for kingdoms.

At the rate they were proceeding, anything in the shape of conversation was quite out of the question, and yet Claude could not help telling himself how strange a thing it was that he should be in his present situation, and how oddly fate had made him the defender of her for whom he would gladly—oh, most gladly, have sacrificed his existence.

There were moments, too, in which he could not help asking himself, if it was real, and anything else than some vision of his slumbers; but then again, when he felt that she was really with him, his heart bounded with new-born exultation, and for once Claude Duval was really happy.

"Hark, hark!" cried Cicely, after a time. "Oh, hark, they come! they come!"

"Fear nothing. Are you not with me?"

"Yes. But you do not know the horrors to which they would drag me. Oh, save me! save me!"

"You cut me to the heart, Cicely. Do you think it possible that I could desert you?"

"No, no, and yet—and yet——"

"Yet what?"

"Your enemies are so numerous. Oh, I have much to tell you—very much. You will not believe that I am mad."

"Never, never!"

The clatter of the horses' feet of those who were pursuing them now came most distinctly upon their ears, and Claude urged the willing steed he rode to renewed exertion. It was probably fancy, or possibly the fact that Sue was not accustomed to carry double, but Claude certainly thought that he had never found her lag as she now did to his perceptions, and yet the speed she really made, burthened as she was, amounted to something prodigious. It was the imagination of Claude which outstripped her.

"Are we distancing them?" whispered Cicely.

"Yes, yes. You see yon cluster of trees?"

"Yes. It seems a little forest."

"To the eye it is. If we reach there, I think I can procure you more safety, than in this headlong flight."

"Those are happy words."

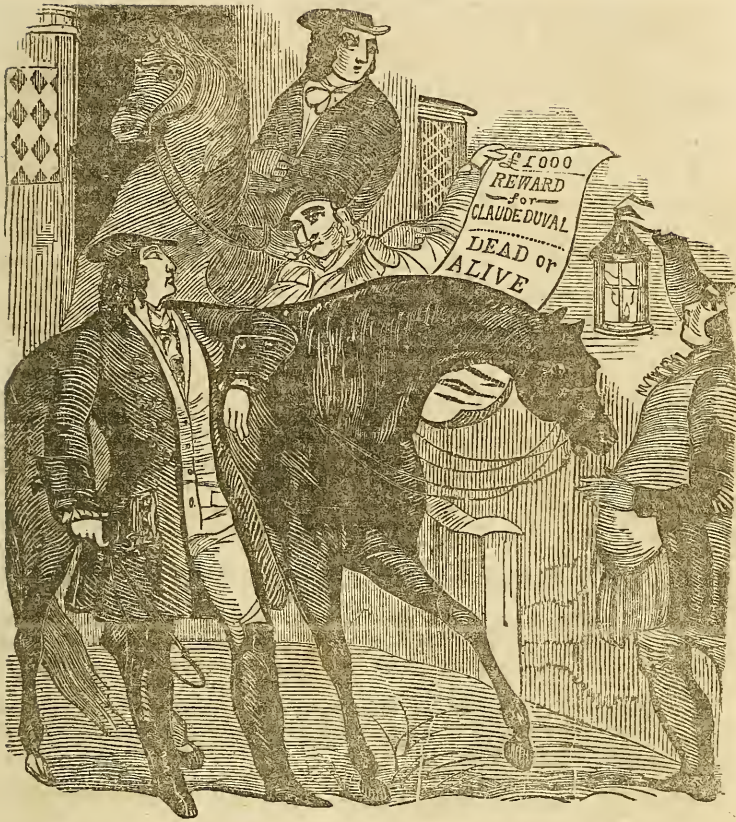
There was a cross road now close to them, and as evil fortune would have it, there issued from the cross road, a man on horseback. Claude saw him, and from the moment that he did so, there was a something about the fellow's countenance which told him that he saw an enemy. A dull, brutalised look was about the stranger's face until he heard the shouts of Claude's pursuers. and then he became more animated, as he cried,—

"Oh, so you are running away, are you."

"Out of my path," cried Claude.

"Indeed, you don't mean it?"

"By heaven, you know not your own danger! Clear the way!"



"Not till I have stopped you. There's a reward, perhaps, and I have no sort of objection to a good morning's work. Come on."

Every inch of ground was of importance to Claude, and yet rather than chance an actual collision with the stranger, he swerved from the high road to endeavor to pass him, but that was a manœuvre the man would not permit of, for drawing a large horse pistol from his saddle he presented it, crying,

"I am never without one of my little bull dogs. Come, resistance is as useless as it is foolish. Stop, I command you!"

"You will have it then," said Claude.

"Have what?"

"That!"

As he spoke, Claude drew from his breast the small pistol he always kept there for a last extremity, and upon which he knew he could well rely, and fired at the stranger. Almost at the same moment, the harsh report of the large horse pistol came upon their ears, and Claude felt the ball whistle past his cheek. There was a cry though from a human voice at the instant, and when Cicely opened her eyes again, for she had momentarily closed them in terror, she saw that the saddle of the stranger's horse was empty.

"Such is the reward of folly," said Claude.

"What has happened—what has happened?"

"Nothing—nothing, but what was absolutely necessary," said Claude. "I regret such things, but they must be, and now, my Sue, to your work again."

Once more the gallant animal that had carried Claude through so many dangers, started on in its headlong career. The little wood he had alluded to was still about a mile distant, and his great object was to reach it, and plunge into its recesses.

Short, however, as was the time which had elapsed during the encounter with the imprudent stranger, it had yet sufficed to enable the pursuers of Claude, to gain considerably upon him, and the consequence was, that they now, with no doubt the hope of intimidating him, set up shouts of triumph as though their victory over him was sure. Ah, how little they knew the indomitable spirit of the man whom they pursued, and of whose ways and manners of avoiding them they could not have the faintest idea. But if these shouts could have no effect upon Claude himself they had much effect upon the more feminine imagination of poor Cicely, and when she heard them she almost imagined herself in the grasp of her foes.

"On—on," she cried, "faster, oh, faster!"

"Be calm—I pray you to be calm," said Claude. "We are widening each moment the distance between us and our foes."

"May I be assured of that?"

"Grasp me tightly, lest you fall, and then look round, and you will see how little we have to fear."

Cicely did as she was directed, and then she said—

"Who are those men in scarlet? Why should we be hunted?"

"Hunted!"

"Yes—yes. There are men in red coats, and hark! what means that cry?"

"Yoicks! yoicks! tantivy!" cried a loud, clear voice, and in an instant Claude's path was crossed by other hunters, who, seeing that he was pursued, endeavored to stop him. He drew rein, presented a pair of pistols, and said—

"Now, gentlemen, I'm a good shot; who among you will give up their lives for the satisfaction of feeling that the survivors have a chance of stopping me upon the king's highway?"

"Oh, come on—come on," said a portly personage.

"Thertainly," said a young gentleman, with a lisp. "I don't come out to be shot, not I."

They one and all turned their horses' heads on one side, and left a free passage for Claude, who as he passed them, said,—

"Gentlemen, I thank you, and I think you will none of you repent this act of courtesy towards one who, whatever may be his errors, is right for once. Good day, gentlemen."

Cicely was as much astonished at this, as the small-brained gentlemen who could find nothing better to do than to scamper after a hare; and before those who had called upon the gentlemen who had been coming to stop the fugitives could overtake them, Sue was, with her master and Cicely, fairly beneath the umbrageous trees.

"Cheer up, cheer up," cried Claude, "the worst of our danger is past."

"All past?"

"All that need give you any disquietude."

"But what are we to do here?—for how long can such a place as this afford us any shelter? Oh, what will become of us? into what danger have I led you, who have made such efforts for me? I ought not—indeed I feel I ought not, in this manner, to have thrown myself upon your hands."

"Fear nothing."

"It is not fear, but regret that I feel."

"Ah, do not regret that you have made me so happy."

"Happy?"

"Yes, most happy in the dear joy of being able to say to you that I have saved you from your enemies, although who they are, who can be the enemies of such as you are, Miss Brereton, I cannot devise.

"I will tell you all."

"Not yet—not yet. Let me first place you in absolute safety before you commence your narration."

"But how can you do so?"

"Hush—hush. We may have listeners."

Claude dismounted, and led his horse by the bridle for a considerable distance, until suddenly they arrived before an ancient residence, that at any other time would have much interested Cicely to look at.

"We are safe—we are safe," cried Claude. "Do not weep, Cicely, I—I should say Miss Brereton."

"Call me what you will," she replied, "so that you complete it with an assurance of my safety."

"I can so complete it," said Claude, "and now let me ask you, can you, and will you entirely trust me?"

"With all my heart."

A glow of pleasure and of pride came over the countenance of Claude, then it was seconded by a look of unutterable woe, as he thought what a chasm his own acts had created between him and Cicely. There was no time, however, just then, for regretful thoughts. Actions were required, and he assisted Cicely to dismount from the horse at the garden gate of the old mansion, close to which they were.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE was a moment's pause after dismounting, and an uneasy feeling crept over Claude as he held Sue by the bridle—a shade of anxiety passed across his brow as he looked at the beautiful animal, for the thought came uppermost in his mind that his own and Cicely's safety was scarcely more necessary than that of his mare.

"Shall we be safe here, Claude," inquired Cicely anxiously, as she saw there was a moment's hesitation in his manner. "Can we not fly further?"

"Scarcely, with a chance of getting off clear, Cicely—but my thought was for my horse, because she is necessary to our safety; but I am no longer doubtful, there is no time for that, I will not leave you here for a moment, lest my retreat be cut off to you by any accident."

"No, no," said Cicely, "I will not leave you, Claude. I shall be safer with you than by remaining here even for you."

Claude's only answer was a gentle pressure of his hand upon the waist, around which his arm yet lingered, and they moved away, Cicely supported partially by Claude with one arm, and with the other hand he led Sue.

Instead of entering the old mansion by the main entrance, Claude Duval led the way across what had once been pleasure walks and flower beds, but bed and walks were now alike undistinguishable. Here and there they would indeed feel a hard soil underneath, and that told them they trod on the gravel walks, and again Sue's hoofs would sink in the soft mould, which informed them they were crossing what had been once flower beds, and thus they passed over more than an acre of ground.

"Great changes there have been here," muttered Claude, "yet sunk as the old mansion is in its estate, it will afford us shelter, and I hope to make it good against those who follow."

Claude came to a wild and desolate spot, it was difficult to tell what it had been used for—but there were many aged willows growing around, and there

was a large pool of stagnant water, covered by that species of aquatic herbage called by some the "green mantle of the pools."

"This has no doubt been at some time a fish pond and fountain—the fountain has long ceased to play, and the water become stagnant and unwholesome, and I have seen dead animals floating upon it—it is a lone spot, but here is a place where I can conceal Sue with safety."

"In that water?" inquired Cicely, looking up in amazement.

"No, indeed, Cicely, but there is some brushwood by that water, it seems as if it were surrounded by water,—that they in fact grow out of water; I must wade to get to them knee deep, but no matter for that, there is a dry spot there, like a cave or chamber, which I suppose has been used in connection with the fountain, there is room enough there for Sue. You had better remain here, Miss Brereton for a short time. You will be safe here, but to reach the place of safety for Sue, we must pass through the water."

"Do not be long, Claude," said Cicely, "do not leave me for long, for I am fearful of being alone."

"But a moment," said Claude, who led Sue through the stagnant water, to a spot which rose again, and then entered an unseen excavation in the bank, the entrance of which was quite grown over by rank weeds and creepers, and thus hid the entrance so completely, that none could detect the spot by the eye, and had it been detected there would have been no known entrance, save through the waters of the pond.

The excavation did not appear larger than was necessary to admit the body of the mare, and then having secured her by the bridle, so that she should not push her head out from among the green herbage and thus betray herself, Claude Duval sprang back to the bank, and to the side of Cicely Brereton.

"Now Cicely," he said, "we have no time to lose. I think I can hear their voices among the trees, but yet they are at some distance from us, the wind brings the sound to us, and makes them seem nearer than they are."

Then half supporting the fragile form of Cicely Brereton, he hurried her from the spot across some other flower beds, or rather what had once been such, and then entering at an ornamental shrubbery, he approached the back part of the old villa.

The building was evidently in ruins, and yet there was much in its appearance that denoted solidity and strength, and if it were possible to secure the entrances, it would be possible to hold out successfully against a very formidable force.

Approaching the villa by a terrace, he reached one of the large windows which opened upon it—being glazed—but now every vestige of glass was gone; scarcely, indeed, did any memento of the glazier's art remain; through one of these openings he assisted Cicely to enter, and then Claude followed, still giving her the support of his arm.

"Will they not enter by the same means, Claude?" she inquired, pointing to the open window or door.

"Yes, Cicely, they will. There are shutters, but they are of no use, the hinges have long since become useless, the weather has rusted them, and they have been broken for a long while, but the entrance will be of no use to those who follow—the doors of the room remain yet good."

Claude Duval now left the room he had entered, and shutting the doors after him, he by means of much exertion contrived to turn the massive but rusty lock, and then the door was secure."

Turning away, he entered a small and more secure apartment, there was a seat—an old chair—one that had been probably used in the hall, or garden, for it was a rough piece of workmanship and yet strong.

"There, Cicely," he said, "you had better sit there for awhile, you must need rest, and while you remain here, I will go and secure all the approaches that can be secured, against the admission of our enemies; then I will return to you, and while I live you shall not be torn away from me."

Claude now strode to the iron door; this was fast and secure against all attempts to force it—at least all such as could be made by the mere bodily strength of those who were coming against it; then he examined the other and less secure doors, and one by one made them as fast as the means at hand enabled him to do.

Turning aside from the hall, he went to the more indefensible portions of the building; that part of the building which had been allotted to the offices and for the domestics was not built so solidly, and much of the wood-work had completely rotted away, and one small door was entirely gone.

"It is an easy entry," he muttered to himself, "and it must be secured, for if they find it—and find it out they are sure to, for there will not be a hole that is not found out when they find they have been barricaded out of the place, and I must have as few places that I am called upon to defend as possible, for being but one, I can scarce defend more than one or two places at one and the same time. Ah! this will do."

This exclamation referred to a large butt that stood in the place, as if it had been once the receptacle for water, but now it was empty, and had long been so; this, by some exertion, he rolled to the empty doorway, and then raising it, he propped it up, so as to fill the aperture.

"That," he said, as he looked at it, "would keep them out, if it were heavy enough to resist their efforts, but wanting that, I must add something to it."

After a short search about, he found some heavy stones, which he threw into the butt, and bricks—besides piling some old lumber across, and placing it so as to strengthen the position.

Claude was now beneath the surface of the earth, and his practised ear at once told him that the enemy was not far off; he could hear the tread of men and horses at a distance, he could feel the earth move, as if it conveyed the motion by waves. He sprang up.

"I must to Cicely," he said. "I must to Cicely. To live with or die for her is my only hope, and my full determination. Heaven grant I escape this bout, more on her account than my own; but for her my situation would not be so desperate, and if they press me, their position is as desperate as mine."

He left the place, and sought Cicely, whom he found where he had left her, seated in the dark room.

"Hark!" she said, listening. "Do you hear nothing, Claude—do you hear no sound as of some one approaching us?"

"Yes, Cicely, yes I do, but do not be alarmed—I have secured the old villa as well as I am able, it will resist some time at least of itself, and it will be my part to assist in making it more difficult of approach."

"Where will you stay, Claude," said Cicely, with a forced calmness, and trying to listen to catch every sound.

"Dear Cicely," said Claude, taking her hand, "I will not tell you falsely that there is no danger; there is, but we may rob it of some of its terrors, and even render it less imminent by courage, and by throwing off the fear that will sometimes cling to us. I will protect you while I have life."

"I know it, Claude, but oh, what a fearful risk have I brought upon you—without me you would not have been sought after thus."

They now ascended the staircase carefully, for strong as they were, or had been originally, they had in many places become decayed, and it was not upon every spot that appeared to be secure that they dared to place their feet with perfect confidence and security, for some places crumbled beneath them.

"There will be more inaccessible places than this," remarked Claude, as he looked down the flight of stairs that led directly to the hall, "and even here, where we have come up in safety, they, rushing up headlong many together, will so damage the place as to endanger their own safety."

Cicely acquiesced in silence, and while Claude entered the various rooms on the floor, to see what positions he could take for defending the various entrances below, she sat upon one of the stairs, endeavoring to assume as much calmness as her strength enabled her to do.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE pursuers, when they came to the wood, paused for a moment, not doubting the way which the fugitives had gone, or the propriety of following them, but it was a question whether it would not be a better plan to spread round the place, and thus beat about as they would for game.

"Go after them," said a stout-looking countryman on a gray hack, "go after him, and don't lose time, he's got a devil of a horse that'll go anywhere, and if you give him a minute's time, the game's up."

"He's a sly old fox," said another, "and if you go straight after him in cover, he'll double and get behind you."

"He can't do that well, the scent's too warm. I'm for going right in at 'em at once," said another.

"Why not surround the place?" said a third. "Surround it by all means, and then we'll all meet in the middle."

"And leave Claude Duval only one man to meet him at a place?" said one of the officers, "no—no, that would never do, you might as well think of his being coaxed into a trap—no—no we must go to him in a body; he's only a man, I know, but he's got the devil's luck, and that makes a great difference, you know; spread open if you will, but keep in each other's view, if you would be safe."

This proposal was apparently relished by most of the individuals present, who, though valorous enough, and even quite willing to meet anybody on earth who wore two legs, and yet somehow, save one or two country men, they all kept close together and did not spread themselves too much apart.

"Dang Claude Duval," said a young farmer, "there be as good men as he I'll warrant, though he may have killed his man. I've got a pistol, too, and if he fire first, or has a better eye than I have—why he'll not be taken by Sam Hodges, that's all."

"Push on, and don't spend time and breath to no purpose," shouted one of the officers, who were present, "push on, I say, the more time they have the harder it will be to unkennel them."

"They will make for the old villa," shouted one, "and try to make a stand there—follow me, we shall soon be there. See, here are the footmarks of his mare."

They now all pushed forward, following pretty closely the first who led the way, and this was the more necessary when they got in, for the wood was close and tangled, and there was no room to ride about, for the horse and rider could not find room in which to do so.

There was less need either for their doing so, since there was plain and evident traces of Claude's progress through the wood—the open path was one sign, and the footmarks were another, for the soil had been so soddened by the rain that the marks were many and distinct, besides this, there was the sure fore-knowledge that they possessed, that he would make for the old deserted villa, and there make a stay.

The two horsemen who had the charge of Cicely were incessant in their endeavors to urge their companions onwards. They were too fearful themselves that if they were separated from the main body, they might again meet Claude, and then what might happen made either shake in his saddle, so that there was great danger of a fall.

They passed through a great portion of the wood, until they came to the grounds which environed the villa, and as the trees were not quite so close and thick, they paused a few moments to allow their whole body to come up, and then hold a council of war.

"Now," said one of the officers who had before spoken, "now we are altogether, let us determine upon our course of action. The man we have to

deal with is a daring and determined fellow, and whoever takes him will be no cur I can promise; but we must support one another."

"Yes, yes, that is understood."

"Then let us secure our nags here, in the event of our wanting them in a hurry; if we take them closer to the house, why we may endanger their safety, at a time too when some one may most require them. Secure the nags and then we will walk up to the house—no doubt they are there, and we shall have to search the place."

"No doubt he's there," said one of the pursuers. "I know the place, I have been here before, not lately, but years ago, and I know then I could have made it good against a regiment of soldiers."

"Aye, but the bats can fly in and out now; but we shall soon know now if he be there or no by the place being secured against us. That will be a good sign, lads. Come, come, let's waste no more time, push on after me, and then remember the reward."

There was some necessity for reminding them of that, as the near approach of hostilities seemed to have quelled the spirits of some of those who were hasty and hot at the entrance of the wood, and yet being all in a body, there was no great want of courage or determination, but the tone was subdued, as they approached the old villa to reconnoiter.

"It's been a fine old place," said one of the horsemen.

"Aye, quite a palace."

"And would be one now, if it were in good order, only they would have to make a mile or two of a road to get to it."

They now walked up to the door—the main entrance; the steps were covered with herbage and green moss, which had accumulated and given food and root-room to much vegetation. They surveyed the door, and then tried it, but it resisted their efforts.

"It is useless to try there; that door is sound and strong."

"We may as well wake them at all events," said one or two who had come up, and they began beating the door with their heavy riding whips, and kicking it with their boots.

"We shall not get in here," said one of the officers; "there are other places not so strong behind. Come round this way."

"We had better have one or two on this side, lest he attempt to escape unseen," said another.

"Yes, let two of you stay here, while we go round the angle—one at each corner, so that you can assist each other, and see yet down the sides of the house—give tongue, lads, if you see a mouse stirring."

"Aye, aye; keep a look out at the windows, Bill," said another. I expect every moment to see the muzzle of a pistol popping out somewhere or other, taking a cool aim."

Thus they left two men, while the main body turned the sides of the building in search of some more accessible place in the old villa, where they hoped to get in at. They saw, however, that every place had been secured—not a loophole but what had been barricaded.

"He is here, lads, of that there can be no doubt, none at all. The old ruins were never left thus."

"No, no. I have been in here before to-day, and I know the place was open; any one who chose might enter it."

"Hurrah! hurrah! then we have earthed the fox at last. Now, my boys, we have only to get in, and then you know the value of Claude Duval's head."

"Aye, we have only to get in—aye, lad, something more than that either. We have to get in first truly, and then we have to take the lion, no easy task, and yet we can do it, or I would not make one in the attempt. We can run him down, and walk over him if we keep together."

"One and all lads," said the officer.

"But where are we to get in," enquired one of the horsemen who had been

so defeated by Claude Duval. "I see no opening unless you climb up to some of those windows."

"No, no, that will be the last place to attempt; but see, here are some windows on this terrace that appear most likely to offer us the means of entrance."

CHAPTER XXV.

A SHOUT announced that they had found a means of entering the old villa—all rushed to the spot, where it was seen to be the same rooms that Claude Duval himself and Cicely had entered, and had left them in the same condition as he found them, because there was no means of securing large glass doors and windows that opened from the floor, and the shutters of which were decayed, and quite unmanageable for the purpose of defence.

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the foremost, "he must have forgotten this, or at all events he could not secure it. "Push on, lads, no hanging back now the time's come for action; we shall soon be at it."

The men soon gained access to what had once been the banquetting hall; they made a rush to the door, but it obstinately resisted their efforts to stir it. When they found themselves thwarted, one of their number proposed to smoke them out;—but it was objected to, everything being so damp from the previous rains. Claude stood on the stairs, listening to this converse and to any sounds that might indicate their entrance. There was a sound of heavy blows against the wall and the door, and at each blow the place shook violently. They continued this battery, and Claude continued to watch its effects with great anxiety. "It will never stand that long," he thought, "and if something be not done to prevent their forcing it, they will soon be here in a body; but there is no place where I can overlook these fellows; if there were they would not continue that game so uninterruptedly."

Claude had scarcely formed this reflection, before the door split, and its pieces gave way.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the men, "now for Duval's head: now for a prize! hurrah for a highwayman hunt!"

Claude Duval bit his lip, and a shade of paleness came across his brow as he heard the cries of the mob of men who so savagely thirsted for his blood.

"If I have broken the laws," he muttered, "I have hurt no one of these muttering fools, whose appetite for bloodshed must be satiated amongst themselves,—for while I have arms and life, they shall not touch me; much less shall they lay their unhallowed hands upon Cicely Brereton."

One man was about to step over the broken fragments, and rush along the passage that divided him from the main staircase, on which stood Claudé Duval, whose voice suddenly arrested him.

"Hold! hold!" he cried.

The man paused in the midst of a step he was about to take; indeed his leg was lifted, and he stood in that posture for a moment or two, as if enchanted.

"Hold!" again cried Claude, "any man who attempts to pass into the house is a corpse; keep back, for your lives. I never miss my aim."

There was a dead silence for near a minute, and then a rush was made by those behind, who were not likely to be touched by Claude's bullet upon the unhappy wight in front, who, had he the desire to recede, would not have been permitted, for his rear supporters thrust him forward, shouting—

"On, on! 'tis Claude Duval. On, on! capture him! don't let him escape. Hurrah! hurrah for the reward!"

The man in front thus urged on, found himself in the passage, and the next moment the sharp report of the pistol was heard, and the foremost man stag-

gered, groaned, and fell, all huddled up in a heap, while some kept back and some rolled over him.

"Fire for fire!" exclaimed one of the officers, who levelled his pistol at Claude and fired; but Claude, seeing so many men in the passage, knew that he exposed himself needlessly as a mark to all, for all no doubt carried fire-arms—it was usual to do so; therefore he now hastened to Cicely, who would require all his care.

There was a momentary pause among those below, and it seemed that Claude's retreat was only effected in good time, for more than one pistol had been drawn, and no doubt they would all have been discharged upon him had he remained.

"Poor fellow," said one of the besiegers, as he assisted to bear the fallen man away, "his time is gone—he's quite dead."

"Is he dead?" inquired one of the two horsemen, who had been the cause of Claude's pursuit, and who shuddered and shook from head to foot.

"Yes, quite dead; but go on up stairs and help to take Claude Duval, for he will not be taken without a little blood being spilt; go up, and take your share of it."

This advice did not seem to be agreeable; nevertheless the individual addressed did go forward, but it was after many others had gone up and screened him. The stairs, we have said, were old and rotting; though many of the main beams were good and secure, and made of oak, yet the water occasionally streaming through the house, and laying there, had rotted much; still they continued to go forward, not without some accidents of rather a serious nature—from slips, and holes being forced through, and a man's body disappearing up to his waist, while his legs appeared below the flooring, and but for being quickly extricated, he would have disappeared altogether, at the cost of his bones.

"Ah, Claude, Claude, save me!" said Cicely, in a low, trembling tone, as she almost sunk in his arms. "They come for me! they come for me!"

"Hush! Cicely, hush! and do not be alarmed; be courageous, and all may yet be well. We have many chances; prudence and caution may yet save us through all; but I ask you to keep up your courage, Cicely, and do not despair or feel terrified at what you hear or see."

"I will trust all to you, Claude; I do trust in you. Do but save me from these men, who would bear me away to a living death. I will but see and hear you, Claude."

As Cicely spoke, she placed her hands upon his shoulder, and looked so imploringly, and yet so full of confidence upon him—and yet seemed to dread the coming conflict, in which she feared so much for Claude, as well as herself—she hardly knew how to express her feelings to him, but he saw the tears course down her cheeks, and saw her generous emotion, and the endeavor to suppress it—and in a moment of ecstasy, he pressed her to his bosom, saying:—

"Dear Cicely, do not doubt, do not fear. I will run no unnecessary danger; my life is dear to me, because without it I know what a sad fate awaits you—be confident, and all may yet be well."

Cicely turned her lips nearer Claude, as if she were about to say something in reply, when, urged by the opportunity and the feeling of the moment, Claude's lips met those of Cicely. She shrank not, the terror of the moment and her confidence in Claude were so great that she resisted not, but was passive, and her clear blue eyes looked eloquently into his.

A thrill of pleasure, which Claude had never before experienced, shot through his veins, and he felt for the moment giddy with excitement, but was quickly recalled to the full sense of his situation by the shouts and the sounds that kept approaching nearer and nearer.

"We must fly this place, Cicely; when we pass across the head of the landing, hasten up without me—I will keep them back until you are safe, and I will rejoin you."

As he spoke he passed out of the room in which he had been listening to the sounds of the besiegers below, but he had scarcely done so, before he felt a hand grasp him by the throat, and saw a pistol thrust into his face.

"Surrender, Claude Duval, surrender—you are my prisoner. I have taken you, and you die if you resist."

"Take that, then," said Claude to the individual who declared he had taken him, and at the same time he dealt the man such a blow on his head with the butt of his pistol, that the adventurous man relaxed his hold, dropped his weapon, and fell backwards down the stairs, overthrowing two more who were hastening up to his assistance, and this impeded all who were behind.

Claude Duval then hastened up a flight of stairs higher, but these were very precarious, and but for his rapid steps he must have fallen through the crumbling boards; once upon this landing, he paused, and after casting a glance below, he examined some of the rooms, and then appearing satisfied, he placed Cicely in one, saying as he did so,—

"Do you remain here, dear Cicely; I will not leave you; I shall be but on the landing, and when they have got so far, I shall come to you."

"I will not leave," she murmured. "I will share the danger—you shall not expose yourself to this peril for me, and yet I shrink from it—no, I will watch with you."

"Nay, you can but increase the danger, Cicely; by myself I can take care of myself, without other thoughts distracting me; but hark! I must back to the stairs, I hear them coming."

Claude rushed back to the landing, and found that the enemy had got up the stairs, and were within a short distance of the top, and he was about leveling his pistol at them, when from their too great numbers the place gave way, and several were precipitated down below, causing much confusion and dismay among them, so much so that a short cessation of hostilities took place, and the officers who were present spoke out,—

"Come, my lads, do not hang back, or be daunted by one man, encumbered with a woman; we must have him, and I call upon you all in the king's name to assist me to apprehend him, alive or dead. You all know the reward you will get, and in addition, you will rid the roads of a scourge, and perhaps save yourselves from some future attack."

"But we can't get at him," said one.

"Oh, yes," replied the officer, "where there's a will, there's a way. must go up these stairs one at a time."

"One at a time, and he will pick us off," said another.

"No," replied the officer, "that must not be. While you are making your way we must be on the watch, ready to pick him off if he appears. One party to go forward, and another to fire if he shows his face, that at all events will insure our getting close to him, and he can but fire once before we rush upon him, and he is then our own."

This seemed so feasible, that it was agreed upon all hands to adopt it, and having seen blood flow, they were warmed to their work, and felt determined not to be baffled by one man; the desire of vengeance was now added to avarice, and they at once prepared to follow out the plan devised by the Bow-street runner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLAUDE DUVAL, who had stood upon the stairs, and overheard the whole of the dialogue, felt convinced that now was to come his greatest danger. It was not that he shrunk from any conflict, however unequal, for his boldness and good fortune had been proverbial, and they even yet gave him confidence; but if he fell, he felt how forlorn was the situation of poor Cicely; his troubles would be ended by his death, but that was not the case with Cicely, whose terrors would but date their recommencement at his fall.

"I have faced worse and more imminent risks," he thought, "and I have escaped, and why, now I have a good cause to back me, should I fail? but they shall pay a dear price for me, ere they say they have taken Claude Duval, or before they shall convey Cicely Brereton to a madhouse."

The thoughts of the last piece of barbarity nerved his arm, and leaning over the rails, he perceived his enemies were coming on slowly and cautiously one after the other, and others were waiting pistol in hand to shoot him, and thus they progressed towards him. Stealthily he stole upon them, and exerting great strength, he overthrew a door, which went over with a noise little less than thunder, and completely stayed the onward motion of those below, for a loud groan proclaimed that there was much mischief done.

Indeed, several men had been knocked down, and one nearly crushed to death, but ere Claude had got back to the door of the room which he had left Cicely in, a bullet from one of the party below whizzed past him, and the report reached his ears simultaneously.

"After him—follow him close," shouted the officer. "He will pay dearly for this; some of you behind look to those who are hurt. I will keep a look out for him; my shot did not miss him by much."

The door had not destroyed those who were nearest to Claude, but only some of those who were lower down, among whom were several who received severe contusions, and one man was carried away completely disabled, and thus the party, strong as they were, had been weakened by the fall of several of their force, but yet they had gained the next landing, and were now on the same floor with Claude and Cicely, and a desperate attempt was made to force the door, but without any success in the first instance."

"Fire a bullet through," said one. "You may chance to hit him, or at all events make him keep clear."

This was done, and a small hole in the door soon proved that it had found its way through; but they saw nothing, and began anew to kick at the door, the panels of which soon gave way, and then the remainder of the wood-work thus weakened, fell in also with a loud crash.

In another moment they were in the room, but the bird was flown. Another door at the opposite end at once explained the means, and this was soon forced open, and then another room was before them, but the boards had in many places given away, and they could see the room below. It would take some trouble to get across without a fall, but it was possible.

Scarcely, however, had the foremost got three parts over the rafters, before a bullet from the pistol of Claude stretched him on them—balancing for some seconds, and then pitch head foremost below.

There was a momentary pause—the dead man fell without motion, and lay like a heavy log upon the floor, and those behind looked upon him, and then at the place where the pistol was discharged from, and then again hesitated. But those behind were too far advanced to retreat, and therefore thrust those in front forward, and then a rush commenced, and they reached the door, and then a small flight of stairs led upwards into a small room.

"He is a dead man that attempts to follow," said the voice of Claude. "There has been bloodshed enough for one day."

"We have lost too many men, Claude Duval," said the officer who had

before spoken. "Tis my duty to persevere, and I will. Upon your head will rest the blood that has been shed—so surrender."

"When I lose the desire of self-preservation. And as I fight but for life, and shed blood but to preserve my own, and you for the sake of money, why I shall not surrender—so die!"

Again the pistol of Claude was heard, and another man fell; and ere the sound of the discharge could have ceased, two others were fired at Claude, who, however, had just shifted his position, and thus escaped by the narrowest chance.

"Onward! forward!" cried the officer. "He cannot yet have loaded; besides, his ammunition must run short. In the king's name, I charge you all to aid and assist me in capturing a highwayman."

"Yes, master officer," said one of the countrymen; "yes, but do you go first a bit now. We'll help you, but you musn't expect us to do all the work and have all the hits to ourselves."

"Are we not forward?" said the officer. "Have I not exchanged shots with him several times?"

"I won't deny you've fired, but we have caught the bullets. However, I hope we shall have most of the pounds. But I'm willing enough to help to get him, if that be possible."

"Possible—aye, more than possible," shouted the officer, as he sprang past the speaker up the stairs into the room above, which was empty, and then across a small room, through two or three more, until he came to another door, which he found open, and displaying a flight of stairs, or rather steps, which had been broken down, and thus all communication from above cut off.

"He has gone this way; we must be down after him. The distance is easily dropped. Keep a look out while I get down, and if you see anything move, fire at it immediately," said the officer.

In another moment the officer had dropped down on the flooring beneath, without any injury to himself, and he was speedily followed by the others; and again a chase was commenced from room to room, from floor to floor, after Claude Duval, who could be seen occasionally as he strode from place to place, as he found them indefensible, and so he deemed it too hazardous to remain there.

They were now on the ground floor again, but they had got in quite a different part of the old villa. It was growing dusk now—the sun had set, and darkness was creeping over the scene—for much time had been consumed in making the attack, and following Claude from room to room, stair to stair, and from floor to floor.

"If this last but another hour," said Claude, "we may yet succeed in escaping, Cicely. When darkness comes we may, indeed, have a chance of leaving them behind."

"Oh! Claude, what terrible dangers you have run. When will they cease—when shall we be safe?"

"Speak not of it, Cicely. You are my dearest care. All that man can do shall be done. When they cease to pursue then we shall be safe. I do not hide our danger; but all you need do will be to arm yourself with fortitude and patience, and all yet may end well."

"Shall we get out into the garden now, Claude?" said Cicely, as she pointed to a window that looked out into the shrubbery.

"No, we cannot; our egress is barred—besides, we should be a fair mark and we should be taken—besides, we have not time; this way, Cicely. Go to the bottom of those stairs, and there stand, for I hear them coming."

Cicely went down slowly, feeling her way along as well as she could, while Claude levelled his weapon at one of his foes, who fell, making another pause in the pursuit."

"Now," said Claude, as he pulled and secured the door after himself, "we are safe for a short time, this door they will be unable to burst open sud-

denly and then among the many passages here, they will not be able to distinguish the one in which we may shelter ourselves, but, Cicely, the place is cold and damp, and is indeed such that might well occasion you a shudder."

"Any where with you, Claude, for safety," said Cicely, "any where, save me from these men, Claude, and my lasting gratitude will be yours."

"Dear Cicely, do not doubt my will or my endeavors, it must go hard indeed if they tear you from me," said Claude, "but I fear your strength, Cicely, I fear what you have gone through—the hours of exertion and of intense fear and anxiety, must render you almost incapable of further exertions."

"Nay, Claude, while we are in danger I feel no fatigue."

"Bear upon me," said Claude, "and I will take you over the rough ground, we have got to go over. Ah! they have broken open the door already."

In another moment, the pursuers were pouring down the steps. Claude looked around him, he saw a door, opened it, and drawing in Cicely he closed it, and quietly and quickly bolted it without being seen or heard by the pursuers who were now in utter darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLAUDE DUVAL had only saved himself and Cicely by the narrowest chance imaginable, and it was only through the darkness of the place, for the officers had come out of a partial light and were almost blinded by the utter gloom around them; the little light that came in, came from them to him, and enabled him to shut the door unseen and unheard, for the noise they made would have drowned any he might have caused in bolting the door.

In another moment they heard several men rushing by them, and a shot was fired by some of them for the purpose of securing their progress, and in the hope that in the dark a stray shot might take effect; another reason was, the flash enabled them to see where they were.

"Be silent, dear Cicely," said Claude, as he felt her tremble and shudder when the report reached her ears, and the place struck cold and damp to them both.

Claude paused a moment or two, and then feeling his way with his hand, he led Cicely away until they had got several yards from the spot—he then came to a shelf in the wall and found a bottle, he felt it over and over, it was corked, and covered with dust and cobwebs, he took it gently, and then placed it in his pocket.

At a more convenient opportunity, he thought, I will ascertain what it contains, it may be a cordial, and if so, it is welcome indeed after so many hours of abstinence, languor, and fatigue.

Again he made his way onward in the same manner as before, until he came to some wood-work, and upon examining it he found it was a door, he paused and listened, he heard no sign or sound beyond it, and then feeling for the lock, found it was secured, but it was so rotten that but a slight exertion enabled him to destroy it and open the way beyond.

There was a cold noisome air exhaled—earthy and moist, so cold and so chill that even he, Claude Duval, paused ere he went farther, and Cicely completely shook from head to foot so violently that Claude knew not what to do; he recollected suddenly the bottle which he had picked up, and at once made up his mind to use it before going any further.

"I have," he said, "got a bottle of something here; it may be wine, Cicely. I will open it, and as well as the means will allow, if it be what I suspect if

is, you must partake of its contents—you are exhausted, and these cold shudders will do you much mischief unless you have a remedy."

Cicely made no reply, and Claude Duval, who listened a few seconds, then struck the neck off the bottle against the brick-work, and then from the broken fragment of the bottle he tasted it.

"It is some of the finest port I ever tasted," he said; "Cicely this will recall some of your strength, and enable you to withstand the effects of the cold and damp; do not fear it, it is necessary that you should taste it."

Cicely, as well as her trembling hands enabled her, tasted of the wine, and at the entreaty of Claude she swallowed several mouthfuls, and refused any more, but Claude himself, who had suffered much from hunger and thirst and fatigue, was not so sparing—he knew that much depended upon his courage and strength, and at once drank freely of it; then throwing the fragments of the bottle away he said:

"I hear them coming through the passages again. I cannot tell where these passages lead us to, but it is not improbable they will lead us to some spot that is not guarded by our enemies."

"I will go wherever you lead, Claude. Wherever you lead,—do but take me from them and my life is yours."

Claude pressed the confiding and gentle creature to his bosom, and then whispering words of endearment into her ear, prepared to lead the way.

They advanced and but slowly, for the passage into which they had got was low and damp; they had to stoop their heads as they went onwards, to avoid the brick-work, which in many places was destroyed and fallen down.

But beneath them, as they walked along, they felt little more than wet and sloppy earth, with here and there a pool of foetid water, broken and decayed bricks and substances which they did not stop to examine.

In the meanwhile the pursuers were at fault.

"Which way have they gone?" inquired each man of his neighbor. "Which way have they gone?"

"Aye! which way have they gone indeed," said the officer. "We want lights and then we can tell, but without lights we are not likely to find them, for there are so many holes and cellars about this place that we should never hit upon them save by chance."

"Can't we get lights?"

"Yes, but not here; some of the party had better take horse and go to the nearest town or house and obtain lights, and, if possible, more assistance."

"There are enough here," remarked one of those present, "to take him and eat up the reward, too, if you will."

"Well, lads, I don't want any more, but we must stop in the old villa till we obtain lights."

"'Tis quite night," said another, "and before they can return there will be an end of the chase, I think."

"How so?"

"Because Claude Duval will creep out of the house when it is dark."

"That can be avoided; we can place ourselves as sentinels all over the lower part of the house; each room, each staircase and passage can have its man, and I defy the devil to pass without being seen by some one amongst us, much less can a man and woman do so?"

This was so apparent that the plan was adopted, and every one was placed at a post, the doors thrown open, and the windows, so that there was ample means of communication from man to man in a moment.

The whole of the lower story, and a great part of the passages and cellars were thus occupied, so that not a mouse could stir without being seen.

"And now," said the officer, "let me advise you all to be as still and as quiet as you can, you will then be better able to hear if anything be going on which we cannot see. He cannot have got out—he has to do that if he can, and I have no doubt he will make the attempt; the darkness and

silence he will think favorable to his object, and if you listen, you may detect by sound what you cannot see in the dark."

This was at once acknowledged to be good counsel, and each man stood still at his post.

"And now if you three," said the officer to one of his companions and two of those who had joined the chase, "if you will ride and procure lights, we will hunt him out yet before daylight begins."

"Aye, or burn the old place about his ears," replied another.

"Well, I would not object if we cannot find him by any other means; and if we can set it on fire, all well and good,—but if not, we must patiently set to work with pick and shovel till we beat down every door and break a hole in every wall and in every cellar or passage—till we riddle the whole place from one end to the other—and then a few more winters will bring the old villa down with a crash, and crumbling heap of ruins it will be."

"That will be hard work," remarked one.

"Aye, but it will be paid for. I don't like burning, until when all other means fail—then indeed we may try it; but, if he be in, he would sooner be burned than come out,—and that you know would not answer our purpose, for a few blackened cinders could not well be sworn to as belonging to Claude Duval—and then where's the reward to come from?"

"Aye, or where is it to go to?"

"That's easily settled,—it won't go anywhere; but we must wait the return of our comrades."

While the officers were thus patiently awaiting the result of deputing a small party to obtain the means of searching below in the dark, Claude Duval and Cicely Brereton were making their way through several long and tedious passages.

Nothing could be more disgusting and uncomfortable than their route, which lay in what might be truly called the accumulated muck of years, which had collected in long-forgotten and underground passages, where nothing but slime and darkness could ever penetrate.

More than once did Claude whisper words of comfort to Cicely; so chilled and so damp, and so noisome was the air they breathed, that he himself felt it could not be borne for any length of time with impunity.

However, they had been an hour in endeavoring to get out of this long and apparently interminable labyrinth, when suddenly he came against an impediment that somewhat startled him.

He suddenly came to a place that was high, which he was able to stand up in, and then he came against something warm, and a whinnying sound told him in a moment that he had strangely enough come out in the very place where he had secured his mare.

"Sue," he said, in the first moment of his surprise; "Sue, we have indeed met! Cicely, Cicely, we are saved! we are out of the old villa! My horse, if now we can get away without being seen, we are saved."

"Thank God!" cried Cicely, in a low, fervent tone.

Claude Duval patted the neck of the noble creature, and then he paused to listen at the entrance of the cave, but could hear nothing, and in a few moments more he quitted it to reconnoitre.

"The coast appears clear," said Claude, as he came back; "they are no doubt now busily engaged in searching the old villa, the darkness is now complete, and they cannot see any distance from them; I will lead Sue out of the cave, and then I will fetch you, Cicely, and a few moments more we shall leave them behind us as busy as they please to remain."

Cicely remained passive, and Claude Duval led the mare outside the cave, and then taking Cicely in his arms, he followed, and placed her upon the saddle, saying, as he did so,—

"Sue will keep you clear of this stagnant water, and when once out of the villa, we shall be safe."

"But will they not see us—is there not light enough left?"

"I think not; and if there were, these willows are a good screen from them, and moreover I shall take the nearest copse, and by passing through that, I shall gain a path I think they know nothing of, and then we are safe from immediate pursuit."

"And then, Claude?"

"And then," said Claude, mounting Sue behind her, and holding Cicely in his arms, "and then, Cicely, I know a place where I can place you in safety, and where you can have that rest and refreshment you need. The people may not be of that class that you have been used to, but kind treatment and safety are insured."

They had soon quitted the wood, and came out upon a cross road; and when once fairly upon it, Claude Duval put Sue to her paces, and in about an hour a number of miles had been passed over, bringing them to the end of their journey.

"We have now arrived at our destination," said Claude, as he paused before a small garden; "it is a pretty and retired spot, and they have but few visitors; they can spare you a bed and board, and will do so for my sake willingly, and when they know you, Cicely, they will do so for your own."

Having hurriedly explained as much as he deemed necessary of Cicely's present position, Claude commended her to the tender charge of the inmates of the cottage, and taking a fond leave of her, mounted his impatient Sue and was speedily out of sight.

The reader will naturally suppose that the lovely Cicely, thus rescued from a most dreadful fate, was not unmindful of the deep debt she owed to her deliverer, and to this was added the recollection of the magnanimity he had shown towards her friends on a former occasion. Is it to be imagined then that no feeling more warm than that of gratitude found a place in a heart, the very tenderness of which rendered it peculiarly susceptible to a passion which, having been enkindled when she first beheld the noble-minded Claude, had been fed into a perfect blaze by the last few hours of converse with him she now owned as her heart's idol. This being the state of her feelings, it was with a moist eye and sinking voice that Cicely watched his departing form and uttered her faint adieux.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The night was just such a one as Claude loved to be abroad in.

It was not dark, and yet it was not moonlight, for the bright and beautiful luminary was yet young, and there were drifting clouds, which occasionally came over the fair face of it in such a manner, that at periods of some minutes in duration, you could not see your hand before your face.

Then again through some small crevice the young moon would just take a peep at the world, showing its fair face, like some coy beauty, to be admired and then withdrawn.

A gentle dew was falling, which imparted a freshness to the air, and a crispness to the grass, while a nightingale with its soft melancholy notes made the night zephyr full of melody and beauty. Take it for all in all, it was a gentle and delicious night.

Claude, who knew the heath well, sought an elevated position upon it, where he could command a view of many well-known objects.

He waited until the young moon peeped out to show him the tree and house that the years of boyhood had so often looked upon.

"Ah," he said, "if I could but have remained in some spot like this, and been happy!"

It was too late now for the gallant knight of the road to turn sentimental, so Claude shook off from his spirit as best he might, the gloom that seemed inclined to settle upon it.

"It is fate," he said. "It is fate. We have each our mission to fulfil, and I am fulfilling mine. Destiny made me what I am, as destiny I suppose might have made me an archbishop, not but what I doubt if in the latter case I should have been a wit honester, as the world goes than I am now."

Claude's reverence for the church was never very great.

A slight canter, of about a quarter of a mile, brought him to the cottage which had been occupied by his father. The sight of it brought such a torrent of fearful recollections, that after regarding it for a few moments in silence, he turned his horse's head, and fairly galloped from the spot, but he did not well heed in what direction he was going, and when he pulled rein and cast his eyes about him, he to his horror and confusion, found himself within a few paces of the still extant gibbet, upon which his father had hung in chains.

A cry of horror burst from Claude, as all the events of that awful night on which he had first imbrued his hands in blood, (as will be found recorded in Chapter I., page 6.) came upon his memory. He would gladly have flown from the place, but a species of fascination seemed to bind him to the place, and he could not move for some minutes.

When he had in some measure recovered, it was to utter passionate exclamations of horror and of indignation, as the thought of the outrage which had been inflicted upon the dead rushed across his brain.

"Oh God! can it be possible, that human justice ever can stoop to pursue those who have been really criminal, after death has expiated all offences? Father,—father,—You were innocent, and yet they put you to a cruel and a shameful end, and placed your bones to blanch here in the winds of Heaven!"

Overcome by the violence of his emotions, Claude leant upon the pommel of his saddle and wept.

This was a mood, however, not likely to last with one of his iron spirit, and indignation soon again got the mastery over all other feelings.

"I avenged you," he cried. "I avenged you! I struck down the villain who falsely took your life, and suborned others to take false testimony against you. Father, I avenged you, and it was—it must have been right in the sight of Heaven, that I should do so. Was I growing to manhood, to suffer your poor spirit to cry out from the tomb for vengeance—no—no—no, they denied you a tomb. They denied you even a tomb. Oh, God, they would not confer upon you even that small boon."

At this moment there slowly emerged from amid a mass of shadow cast by some trees, on the other side of the gibbet to that upon which Claude was stationed, a solitary horseman, and so slow and utterly unexpected was his appearance by Claude, that to him it had all the effect as if the new comer had risen up out of the earth.

The new comer slowly approached the gibbet, and just as he took off his hat, with what precise object Claude could not guess, the young moon peeped out from a fissure in the clouds which were rapidly careering over its silver disc.

Claude could not be mistaken. It was Sixteen-string Jack! Who Claude well knew had but a short time before expiated his crimes on Tyburn's fatal gallows; no wonder then that Claude sat on his horse, like one petrified, and yet he tried hard, even at that moment of mortal perturbation to make himself think that he must be in some manner the slave of an over-excited imagination.

There was only one circumstance that completely put an end to that feeling, and prevented him from laying such a solace to his mind, and that was, he had before that, in another scene and under other circumstances, seen the figure.

"It must be real," he gasped.

Soon, too, something else, conspired to make him think that it was not a delusion, and that was the fact that the spectre was evidently making great speed to get away from him, which would not have been the case, he thought if his fancy had conjured up the apparition.

Claude was by no means inclined, notwithstanding the horror that had come over him, to give up the chase.

"What," he said to himself, "shall I live all the remainder of my life, be it short or long, in dread of this visitation and its dreadful unknown powers. No—no. Rather let me know the worst at once, than that imagination should make such a coward of me."

With this determination he touched Sue slightly on the neck, and notwithstanding that faithful animal had with the rare instinct of her nature, comprehended that terror had usurped the place of courage and confidence in her master, she bounded forward after the now rapidly retreating horseman.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CLAUDE knew that he was well mounted. It was not from the partiality of affection, or from the vanity of habit, that he had come to consider Sue as almost unequalled, for he had had too many opportunities when life and liberty were at stake, to test the powers of that noble creature, not to feel that she needed not the voice of unfair flattery to fix her as an unrivalled racer, and yet he now fancied that the spectre horseman really gained upon him.

"If I can but keep him in view," said Claude, as he glanced up to the clouds which were rapidly, and to him, most provokingly, accumulating over the moon's disc, "if I can but keep him in view, all will be well, but if he once gets out of sight and hearing I shall feel that the night's chase is over, and that I have to wait until the spectre-horseman again crosses my path."

Claude saw by the darker color now by the road side, for he had got into a regular road track, that there was a considerable patch of grass close at hand, and he turned Sue on to it, for the purpose of sufficiently deadening the sound of her footsteps to enable him to listen for those of the spectre.

"Things of air and vapor," said Claude, "do not make so palpable a tread upon the green earth, so let us on, my Sue, and see if we cannot terminate this wild adventure."

There had been a slight pause while Claude was listening to the sound of the horse's feet, so that the spectre might be fairly supposed to have got an additional start of him, but, at the rate Sue now proceeded, the start was not likely to last for long.

The clouds, too, that had obscured the face of the moon, were evidently clearing off, and a soft, faint, white light began to spread itself over all objects. It was a strange misty-like light, too, and had the effect of exciting the imagination of Claude still more powerfully than before. However, he was not disposed upon that account to pause again, and just as he reached some high ground, which commanded a view of the then little rustic bridge across the Brent, he caught sight of the retreating horseman, standing with his steed apparently motionless upon the bridge.

The moon suddenly broke through a mass of clouds, and there could be no mistake about the horse and man waiting upon the bridge. Without relaxing his speed in the least, Claude dashed on until he could not be farther from the object of his pursuit than a distance which Sue in a few moments would have most completely obliterated, and then, both horse and rider disappeared, over the parapet of the bridge, or through its centre, he could not well decide which.

Now, that this was the likely and probable mode by which a spectre should take its leave of any one pursuing it, came forcibly upon Claude's mind, and he immediately checked the speed of Sue, and slowly made his way to the bridge, beneath which ran the brawling little Brent river.

"Yes" he said. "There can be no doubt. That was the spectre of poor Jack. This is more than strange, it is horrible."

He shuddered as he spoke, and then asked himself what should be his next step. He thought that he had better at once proceed to London again, or cut across the country to some of his old haunts upon the Western Road.

Just as he was upon the point of touching Sue's bridle, he heard a loud splash in the water, upon the other side of the bridge to that where there was the little cataract.

The splash was one loud enough to make itself heard above all the roar and dash of the water, as it fell down the little fall, and rushed through the narrow confines of the bridge. Nothing but the sudden descent into the stream of some very heavy body, could have produced such a sound. In a moment, it turned the current of all Claude's thoughts.

To fling himself from the back of Sue was his first impulse, and then rushing to the parapet of the bridge, he looked eagerly over into the stream, when he saw, notwithstanding the darkness, the form of a horse and rider stemming the little cataract, and swimming towards the green sloping bank of an estate that coasted the river for some distance to the spot.

Claude watched with the most intense interest the progress of the swimming steed. He saw the creature, urged on by its rider, make several ineffectual attempts to leave the water, and climb up the bank of earth, that margined the lawn that was skirted by the river.

The horseman, by both whip and spur, was urging the animal to desperate efforts, but all was useless. The moment it, by a bold plunge secured something of a foothold, the crumbling ground gave way, and with a loud splash it was in the water again.

From his secure position upon the bridge, and with the parapet to steady his aim, nothing would have been easier for Claude than to have shot the spectre, for that it was the same form he had been pursuing he did not entertain a doubt; but the fact that, really or falsely, the form was the representation of Sixteen-string Jack, stayed his hand.

"I think," he muttered to himself, "that Sue would make good a footing even upon that slippery grass and crumbling loam."

As he spoke, he saw that the horseman was making use of a very different method to overcome the difficulty he was in.

Throwing himself off his steed, he himself made for the bank, still retaining the bridle in his hand, and thus released of his weight, and assisted by the bridle, the horse soon regained the land,

Claude in a moment turned to mount, and with him this was usually the work of a moment, but somehow or other he was longer than customary; his foot slipped in his haste from the stirrup, and though such a trifling incident delayed him but a moment, yet it gave the spectre an advantage he was rapidly increasing; but a moment more and Claude Duval was on horseback.

A gentle pressure of the spur upon the sides of Sue was enough to induce her to follow the flight of the spectre, and away she flew over the stream in the pursuit.

"Again eluded," thought Claude, "but pursuit is not hopeless. I will be satisfied this night, if it be possible, what the being is who has thus more than once crossed my path."

When he got into the road he reined up, and cast a look towards town, but there were no signs of anything moving, and though enshrouded in trees, yet he could see far up the road; he paused a moment, and turned his gaze in the other direction; he could see nothing there either; but on listening he fancied he heard the sound of a horse galloping away in the distance.

"Gone again," muttered Claude. "It flits before me like the phantom light in fields and marshes."

Another moment and Claude had reached the spot where the apparition had disappeared. It was a broad opening, with an inn on the left hand, a smithy and some small houses, and then it suddenly narrowed as it ran down hill

and was lost among the dark trees and the foliage of some woods and plantations.

Claude in a moment guessed how matters stood, and dashed at once across the green, and into a small coppice at the end, and was soon amongst the trees.

The road was a descent for a few score yards, and then it led a short way up to the right; but here it was a very sharp ascent, but Claude heeded it not, but rode rapidly up that, and then found, when on the summit, a bridle path, hardly deserving the name, to the left, which he took.

This he followed for some minutes almost in utter darkness, for there was a cloud over the moon, and if there had not been, the foliage would have rendered the finest moonlight useless.

However, this did not remain long, for on coming to an opening in some trees he saw the stranger at a little distance ahead of him. It would seem as though the same things that were impediments to Claude Duval's progress became the same to him.

This caused Claude to urge Sue on, and accordingly he dashed onward, but this manœuvre had been anticipated by the stranger, who had urged his own steed onward.

After about ten minutes, they again emerged upon the same road, and Claude could see the same spectre on ahead of him, about a score or two yards. This was vexing, and Claude began to feel something more than the strange feeling with which he had hitherto looked upon the flying apparition.

He began to feel that he had been beaten, and his mare, he was convinced, was as good as the stranger's.

"He can't have a better," muttered Claude to himself, "and if he gets away it will be a strange thing to me; something more than usual must be at work. Come, Sue, we must step out again."

As he muttered these words audibly, he pressed his leg against his mare's side, and away she went, the sound of her feet upon the road came in regular and rapid beats. All was still, save this, and the sound accompanied him as he rode through the parish of Hendon.

However, Claude now saw that he was gaining ground upon the stranger, who had made many efforts to escape him, and who evidently had some object in avoiding him.

They had now ridden some distance, sometimes diving down some of the lanes leading to Edgeware, and then, breaking through gaps, and returning across the fields.

This had been done more than once, when they were near an old fashioned mansion, surrounded by tall trees, whose luxuriant growth bespoke the absence of the woodman's axe.

In amongst these trees the stranger seemed to plunge, just as Claude Duval thought he must be within his power, for Sue had overtaken them or nearly so; and to save himself, the stranger dashed into the grounds that immediately surrounded the court-yard.

Here Claude reined up, and entered over a broken gate, and soon found himself in an open avenue of trees.

The moon at that moment shed her light cheerily, though mildly, for a cloud that had long been hanging partially over now passed away, and by this light Claude saw the stranger's horse loose in the avenue, and upon looking further, he saw the same figure entering the mansion we have noticed.

Claude dashed up after him, and when near the door, dismounted, and proceeded as fast as he could to secure the mare to the broken rails that yet stood; this done, he looked up at the mansion as if to ascertain its character before he entered it.

"Ah!" said Claude, "one that has had many a festive scene in it, I'll warrant; but I'll fathom this mystery, if I live."

As he spoke, he placed his foot upon the step connected with the door, when he met the stranger's face, suddenly thrust out of it with so much precipitation, and the white moonlight came full upon it, and it looked so ghastly, that Claude for the moment was unable to advance; indeed he took a step or two backwards.

A moment's thought, however, suggested to him that the stranger's head had only been thrown out to discover if his horse were safe, or if indeed he were pursued, for on observing him it had been instantly withdrawn from the doorway.

What, however, struck Claude so much, was the certainty he felt that it was the head and face of Sixteen-string Jack.

This for a moment had a great effect upon him; but at length recovering from his surprise and amazement, not to say consternation, he rushed into the house, in search of this mysterious being, and, by coming to a struggle, to ascertain, if possible, of what character he was, that had so much alarmed him.

Up the flight of stone stairs before him, Claude Duval rushed with all the speed he could, and entered the first room that presented itself, but it was empty.

There was no time to deliberate; Claude saw there was another door, and to that he flew, and found another, which led yet further through a small passage into a gallery; here Claude again caught sight of the fleeting object of his pursuit.

Claude had run from room to room, up one flight of stairs and down another, until his breath was nigh spent, but yet he was resolved to hunt down the object that had caused him so much alarm and uneasiness, if he could exert a limb.

At length, he entered a room, panting with haste, and had got across the apartment before he was aware that there was no other outlet from it; but on looking round, the stranger had just shot through the very door which he himself had entered, no doubt finding there was no other means of escape.

Claude Duval dashed after him, and they were hardly two paces apart, when some of the woodwork of the stairs gave way under the stranger's feet, and he fell; Claude Duval also fell from the same cause, but he contrived to grasp the throat of the stranger, who was decidedly flesh and blood.

CHAPTER XXX.

In a few minutes more they lay on the flooring at the foot of the stairs, both half-stunned and out of breath, and incapable of making much exertion. The moon's beams were hidden for a moment, and Claude could hear and feel that the stranger breathed heavily and rapidly, as he himself, breathed; he felt he was a living man like himself, and he was slowly rising to gain his advantage of position over the fallen man, who, however, did the same thing himself, and had partially arisen.

The moon's rays now fell full upon them, and Claude Duval's gaze rested upon the face and features of the supposed spectre, and he now knew them fully as being those of Sixteen-string Jack. The rays of the moon, however had contributed to throw over them a peculiar pallid hue, and they looked so unearthly that Claude could not help an involuntary shudder, and exclaimed—

“Sixteen-string Jack, by Heaven!”

“What, Claude Duval!” exclaimed the spectre, endeavoring to rise, while Claude, hearing his name repeated in such well known accents, recoiled a little.

"'Tis Claude," said the stranger, "'tis his voice."

"Yes. I am Claude Duval," he said, recovering himself, and rising upon his feet; "but—but—"

"I am Sixteen-string Jack. Are you sorry to meet an old friend, Claude? You sought one?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I should be glad to see Sixteen-string Jack, but I saw him hanged, and you know—"

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Jack, "which I will unfold to you in a more fitting place. I was hanged, Claude, you are right enough. I wish I had known it was you who was riding after me, I would have spared my gallant nag."

"Well," said Claude, "there are some things that we believe, yet cannot understand them. I thought you a dead man, and yet I cannot doubt you live now, though I can't understand how it is."

"That you shall soon, Claude Duval," replied Jack. "You thought me a dead man—well, you were right; I was hanged, and I believe dead; but here I am again. Come, we had better adjourn to a more convenient place than this; you are sure of who I am, Claude, are you not?"

"Yes," replied Claude Duval, "I believe, though I don't understand; but I suppose there is something behind, that will appear on explanation."

"It will, Claude; and now we will seek our horses," continued Jack; "I left mine loose, and I may have some trouble to find him."

"I secured my horse," said Claude.

"Then perhaps you'll give me your assistance to catch mine, since it is at liberty, though she is very quiet."

"With all my heart, Jack; but where do you intend to go to when you are mounted?"

"Wherever you like, Claude. I am very retired at present, indeed I can't well show myself anywhere where I have been known, lest I should cause what is termed a sensation. But no matter. Where do you live? in what cave do you contrive to elude the friendship of Bow-street?"

"You shall see presently, do you know Golder's-green?"

"Yes, well."

"You know the 'Antlers' there, I dare say?"

"I know there is such a place, though I cannot say I have been often there," said Jack. "I may have been in the house, and indeed I think I have; but it is all strange to me."

"Well, there I am in safety, and it's an easy ride to Finchley or to London and for the matter of that, its right for all roads on this side of the Thames, you know."

"Yes, there are good roads from London to Edgware, and good cross roads too; and then you are soon on the Uxbridge, Oxford, and Bath roads."

"Handy for all quarters," replied Claude. "But now, Jack, we may as well get out of this place, since we neither have any business here or any purpose."

They both got out of the place which they had fallen into, and then quitted the old mansion, and walked down the avenue in search of their cattle, with very different feelings to those with which they entered it.

"Well, here is my mare," said Claude, "and now for yours. Where did you leave her?"

"In the avenue. I had no time to secure her among the trees as I at first designed. I thought if you passed by you might overlook the mansion—and if not, when once you were in the house, why I could slip out, find my nag, and off again."

"A good plan," said Claude, "a very good plan for an escape; but I'm glad it failed."

"Why, yes, as it has turned out, I am very glad it did fail; you kept so close upon me, that I had no time even to turn, much less to get out and mount my horse."

"Well, we shall have a night of it yet."

"I see my horse, Duval; do you ride down to the entrance, he may attempt that road, and you can then secure him. I've no mind to walk to the Antlers."

"And the loss of a horse may be the loss of a head," remarked Claude, patting the neck of his own mare; "nay, Sue has saved my neck more than once, and I expect she may do so again."

They rode along at a gentle trot, now and then glancing to the right and left, as they gained open grounds where they could have a full view of the country.

"There is nobody out to-night," said Jack, as they rode along the rode for some distance without meeting any one.

"No," replied Claude, "I see none; just now it is as well, unless indeed it were some one who carried a heavy purse."

"Exactly!"

They rode on in silence for about half a mile, and then they came in sight of the "Antlers."

"Here," remarked Claude, "we shall at all events be secure for the night. But we must go cautiously, for old Matthew does not like too much disturbance; he may have visitors, and a noise might only awaken them to the fact that we are come."

Claude Duval dismounted, and approaching a window, he gave a tap at the pane in a particular manner, at the same time the ostler came out and presented himself.

"We want stable room for two," said Claude; "the horses want well looking to, and to be fed—you understand me?"

"I do, sir: lord love yer, I knows yer ways. I'll feed 'em like princes, and I'll take care of 'em—but step this way, sir, and you shall see the bed I've got made for one of 'em."

"Then make one for the other," observed Jack.

"Ay, ay, sir, I will, in the same stable—no stint of corn and straw here, I can tell you, sir. I'm manager of all that."

They followed the ostler into the stable, and saw the horses carefully attended to; then they adjourned to the house, in the passage of which they heard some sounds of mirth and jollity, but Claude opening a small door, old Matthew appeared.

"I want a private room, Matthew," said Claude.

"You can have one," said old Matthew, in a whisper.

"Good; now let us have some of your choicest wine, Matthew," said Claude, "for I have a friend whom I wish to honor; let us have a good supper—anything good and quick."

"You may depend upon all that," replied the landlord.

"Come on, then," replied Claude. "Lights and wine—we will have a toast or two before we see daylight again."

The landlord preceded them up stairs with a light, while Claude Duval and Sixteen-string Jack followed into a small but neatly furnished room, where the landlord placed the candle on the table, saying as he walked to the door—

"I'm glad to see any friend of yours, Mr. Duval, and will do my best to entertain him and you too, Mr. Duval."

"I know that, Matthew; you know what good cheer is!"

The landlord left the room, and in a few minutes an excellent supper was set before them, of which they partook heartily, for their ride had given them appetites fit to do justice to a less enticing meal.

When the supper things were cleared away, and the wine placed on the table, Claude Duval in pouring out a bumper said to his companion—

"Jack, I wish you prosperity and a long life—I am glad to see one back whom I had looked upon as dead!"

"Thank you, Claude," said Jack; "all I say is, let the dead alone when once they are gone."

Jack took a bumper, and after quaffing it, said—

“You remember when and where you last parted with me?”

“In Holborn.”

“Yes, I was on my road to Tyburn.”

“You were,” said Claude, “and little did I expect to find you upon any other road again!”

“Perhaps not—here I am, however—I got to Tyburn in due course, and was elevated in the usual manner, and attended by many a gaping fool and admiring brother—the gentlemen connected with the object of the procession; the rope was adjusted as they call it, that is, it was put round my throat with due deliberation and regard to immediate choking.

“The next thing I felt was a sudden shock—pain, and a feeling as if the world were swimming away from me.

“The next sensation I experienced was dreadful—or rather it was a compounding and collection of all manner of evils that the human body can suffer.”

“It must have been no joke,” replied Claude.

“Indeed you are right, it was the most fearful moment that ever I felt in my life; I do not desire such another, even to gain life. I think that it lasted a long time; but of time I had no idea.

“The truth was, I had been taken to a Jew chemist, who had resolved to practise some experiments respecting the supposed theory of recovering people who have been dead.

“I recovered; but the recovery was a thousand times worse than the death inflicted. They behaved with humanity to me. I was placed in some blankets, and some strong stimulants administered to me. Indeed, between one thing and another—chemical experiments, and what he called electricity and strong water—I felt bewildered, and completely unable to tell how many lights burned in the room, and fell into a state of insensibility much resembling a deep sleep.”

“An unpleasant affair, but yet a narrow escape.”

“I certainly passed through all that I could. I could have felt or been conscious of no more, had I been left alone for a hundred years.”

“That is true,” remarked Claude, thoughtfully. “Had a bullet gone through your brain, it would have prevented the possibility of your recovery; but I think you would have been conscious of no more.”

“Decidedly not,” said Jack; “however, I found myself very feverish, and very totterish. I was weak. I laid hold of some water at hand and drank. I felt myself revived, though swallowing was not accomplished without a slight reminiscence of the halter. I suffered some pain.

“I began now to recollect the past—I recollected Tyburn—I recollected indistinctly, the occurrences of the night before. I began to dress myself and I succeeded in accomplishing my object.

“When I had walked about once or twice, I was anxious to leave the room, and proceeded to open the door; but here I found myself at fault, for the door was secured. I examined the lock, and found there was no key.

“I was puzzled. I looked again. The key was evidently on the other side.

“The Jew at length entered, and stood for a moment looking at me with a twinkling eye and pleased countenance, in which was a great deal of cunning, mixed with mystery.

“Ah, my tear, so there you are, peautiful and plooming. Oh, you ish nish —,

“Why,” I replied, “I am better than I could expect to be.”

“Oh, no tout of it, my tear. I heard you walk about, so I thought you wanted your preakfast.”

“I am obliged to you,” I replied; “but I have much to thank somebody for, and I don’t know yet whom.”

“Oh, never mind about that, you may tank me—I did it all, you know;

but you needn't tell anybody, you know. But come down stairs, and we will talk over the matter. Come along, come along.'

"I accordingly followed him, and we entered into a small apartment, where there was a breakfast laid for two.

"The old Jew locked the door, and put the key in his pocket, saying as he did so.—

"'Now, my tear, you were going to say you were very grateful, and all that sort of thing; put never mind, you may show your gratitude if you have any, in a much better way than that, 'cause 'tis all worts.'

"'With all my heart,' said I.

"'Well, then, my tear, you know life is worth having, and you will not object to pay me fifteen shillings out of every pound you get on easy terms.'

"'Well,' said I, somewhat startled, 'you mean to say you'll take five shillings out of every twenty!'

"'No, my tear, fifteen out of every twenty—not take, but you'll give—not take at all, my tear—'tis life, and life is very precious, very precious, indeed, and worth it.'

"'The terms are hard,' I replied, 'but I will agree to them; but I am afraid that I shall be an unproductive servant, seeing I have neither horse nor means.'

"'All that shall be cared for, my tear,' replied the Jew, 'now you have agreed to my terms; but beware of playing me false, for I have means of knowing things that you cannot believe, or even understand; so let me caution you.'

"'No fear of that,' said I; 'but when do we commence operations?'

"'As soon as you please—to-morrow?'

"'Agreed,' said I. On the morrow I was put in possession of a good horse, suit of clothes, case of pistols, and a purse with some ten or fifteen gold pieces.'

"'Well,' said Claude Duval, 'a most extraordinary circumstance; but at what a moderate price you were required to pay for your permission to live; and as to the means of paying the tax upon your labor, this Jew always attends upon you, I suppose, to receive the money, Jack?'

"'Yes, he does, and what is more, he seems always to have some kind of information as to what I ought to give him.'

There was but little time to make anything in the shape of comment upon the tale told by Sixteen-string Jack, for events now took place calculated to obliterate all remembrance of it in the absorbing interest of the present.

Claude had just raised his wine glass to his lips, when old Matthew came into the room exclaiming—

"Claude, Claude, there is a travelling carriage at the door. You need not let such an opportunity escape you. Come to the window and you can see it easily. This way; this way! You are in luck to-night, my boy, I can tell you, for I have already seen a purse well filled with money."

At this intimation, both Claude and Jack naturally enough rose hurriedly from the table and proceeded to the window, where they flattened their noses against the glass in a vain effort to see anything on the outside of the old inn.

"There's no carriage," said Claude, "that I can see. Why, old Matthew, you must be gifted with the faculty of second sight.

Scarcely had these words escaped the lips of Claude than he found himself seized by each arm, and upon turning from the window, he felt the cold muzzle of a pistol at each of his temples, while a voice said—

"You are my prisoner, and if you make resistance, you are a dead man. Our orders are to take you, whether dead or alive, and by Heaven we intend to do it."

"Well, gentlemen," said Claude, "I suppose I need not ask you who you are."

"We are officers, of course."

"Very good, and may I ask if old Matthew there knew anything beforehand of this little affair?"

"Yes, he—"

"Hold your tongue, you fool," cried Matthew.

"It's quite sufficient," added Claude. "You have betrayed me, but remember we shall meet again."

"Ah, Jack, so they have nabbed you, too, have they? Well, it can't be helped, and there's no use in making the worst of anything; but you may rest assured, Matthew, that I will settle scores with you."

"Come," said one of the officers, "we cannot stop while you have an altercation. We have only done our duty."

"I have one favor to ask," said Claude.

"What is it?"

"That you will not place irons upon my wrists."

"Hark you," said one of the officers, "it has been said that, if you promise good or evil to any one, you never broke your word yet. Now if you will say, upon your honor, that you will make no attempt to escape, you may ride to London with us as comfortably as possible, and with your hands as free as mine."

Claude was silent for a moment or two, and then, in a low voice he said—
"I cannot promise."

"Exactly," said the officer; "a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. I did not suppose that you would make such a promise, so on goes the darbies."

As to Sixteen-string Jack, he seemed too much depressed to say anything for a time. The anxious consideration in his mind was, whether he would actually be hung again.

The whole party were soon mounted at the door of the Antlers, where the thing that gave Claude most concern was, that he was not permitted to mount his own horse, but was placed upon one belonging to the officers, while one of those personages mounted Sue.

Claude smiled faintly as he said—"You had better let me ride my own steed."

"No, thank you," said the officer.

"Very well. Hilloa! Up, lass—off and away—woa! Chirp, chirp!"

No sooner did Sue hear these cries, than with a snort of defiance she rose upon her hind legs, and then coming down again very suddenly, she made a demi-vault, and the officer lay sprawling in the road, to the great amusement of his companions, who wonderfully enjoyed the joke.

The officer managed to scramble to his feet in some way or another, and then, as he rubbed his head, which had received rather a severe concussion, he muttered,—

"Confound the beast, it is as wild as though it never had carried any one. I'll be hanged if I ride it."

"Then, gentlemen, I presume I may?"

"Oh, yes; confound the brute. Mount it yourself, and see what you can make of it."

Claude smiled, and calling Sue to him, who came with all the gentleness of a pet lamb, he mounted, and no creature could possibly be more docile than she was.

"We have heard," said one, "much of your mare."

"And let you have heard what you will," replied Claude, "you cannot have heard too much of her excellences. I love her now, next to one other breathing thing, dearer than I love all else in the world. She has saved me many a time."

"Ah, your reign is over now!" said the officer.

"We shall see," said Claude.

From that moment Claude dismissed all other objects from his brain and

gave up his whole intellect to a consideration of the means of escaping from the custody of the officers.

The first thing he now wished was to get private speech of Sixteen-string Jack for a few moments, but the officers took good care to keep between their prisoners, so that anything of a private character taking place would be necessarily likewise communicated to those ears which it would be most desirous to keep it from.

During these anxious considerations, Claude and his capturers arrived at the verge of Hampstead Heath, and at that moment there came upon their ears such a terrific clap of thunder, that it was enough to appal the stoutest heart.

The officers paused and looked alarmed, as a sudden intense darkness swept over the face of nature, and made no object even faintly visible within the space of half-a-dozen yards.

"What is all this?" said one of the officers.

"Only a little storm," said Claude. "Are you afraid? If you are, I and my friend will show you the right way, and take charge of you. You may depend upon us."

A flash of lightning, of so awfully dazzling a character, that even in broad daylight it must have been absolutely for the moment blinding, lit up the scene. The officers instantly closed their eyes. The horses reared and showed every sign of fear, but Claude did not even at such a moment think it worth while to make an attempt at escape. A random shot, and the officers had their pistols ready, might have rather ingloriously terminated his career.

"Steady, Jack," was all he said, and that was in order to let Sixteen-string Jack know that he was fully alive to what was passing around them.

"Spur on," cried the officer, who seemed to be best able to stand the terrors of the storm which had begun with such unexampled fury. "Spur on, and let us get to Camden Town. There is a good lock-up there, and we can wait till the storm is over."

It would seem that Sixteen-string Jack at this moment had an idea that Claude was letting a valuable opportunity of escape pass by him, and being quite unable to control his impatience, he cried,—

"Claude! Claude! remember my fate!"

"Peace," said Claude, "I bide my time."

The officers grasped their pistols tighter, and swore many oaths to the effect that instant death should be the result of the slightest attempt to escape, but Claude said with wonderful calmness,—

"I am fatigued, and quite willing to go to the lock-up."

The exclamation of Sixteen-string Jack had had the effect, however, of putting the officers more upon their guard, so that if Claude had meditated any movement it certainly would have been more difficult than before; but as he really did not just at that time, no real mischief was done.

The lock-up at Camden Town, occupied a good-sized bit of ground, and from time to time so much had been done to make it a place of security, into which might be thrust the footpads and others that infested the North-road, that it was imagined by the authorities to be almost impregnable.

Such, however, was not the case, as we shall see.

"Thank the Fates," said one of the officers, as he drew the rein of his horse, "here we are at the lock-up. I never rode through such a storm in all my life."

"I have, frequently," said Claude.

At the abrupt cessation of the trampling of the horses' feet at the door of the lock-up, a man with a red worsted night-cap upon his head, and a pipe in his mouth, looked out, saying—

"Hilloa! any customers for me?"

"Yes," replied the officer. "Here is Claude Duval."

The officials of the place were soon all in a state of commotion. Lights flashed upon the darkness for a moment, but to be extinguished by the dashing rain that had succeeded the hail, and now came down in one combined

sheet of water, and in the midst of all this, Claude and Jack were received into the building.

The outer room was long and narrow. A bright fire blazed at one end of it, and above the chimney-piece was a goodly show of blunderbusses, pistols, and cutlasses; but it was not in this apartment that the prisoners were allowed to remain. A door was opened which conducted to what was called the strong-room, where the more dangerous class of prisoners were stowed away.

"Here," said the constable, as he pushed through, "you may make yourselves as comfortable as princes, if you only know how to set about it, and if you don't, I'm sure I can't tell you, so you can set your ingenuity to work to find out. Ha! ha! ha!"

The door of the cell was closed upon Jack and Claude.

"We are lost!" said Jack, in despair.

"Say you so?" responded Claude, in a voice which was far from being of a desponding character.

"Yes—what can save us?"

"Silence and discretion," whispered Claude, in the ear of Jack. "Do you not perceive, that by the nature of the arrangements of this place, that any words we may say above the merest whisper will be overheard in the outer room?"

"I did not notice."

"Jack—Jack! you are as different from your former self as possible. Time was when you were so bold and so daring that I was emulous of being like you; but now, if my eyes did not convince me that it was you indeed whom I am with, I should doubt your identity."

Jack was silent for a few moments, and then said, in a low voice—

"I will own to you, Claude, that since that horrible day when I was dragged to the gallows, to be made a spectacle of to gaping thousands, I have not been the same man that I was before. The shock of that day's proceedings has left me little more than the weak shadow of what I once was!"

Some time was now passed in silence; Claude Duval's mind was engaged in examining the position he was in, not with regard to any amendment of his condition, but to a total change. Expedient after expedient presented themselves, and were rejected as being impracticable.

"Well," muttered Claude, at length, "this is a sudden and unexpected change thanks to old Matthew."

"Yes," said Sixteen-string Jack. "I begin to feel the halter round my neck already."

"Never mind, Jack—keep your spirits up, man—you are worse now than when I shook hands with you on Holborn-hill."

"Very likely—I've been hanged since then, you know."

"Yes, yes; but listen to the officers, and let us ascertain how the game is to go with them—if we can learn their designs, then we may be able to make intentions of our own, and, what is more, we may be able to execute them."

Meanwhile the officers were loud and noisy—there was much congratulation and boasting.

"Well," said the keeper of the lock-up, "so you've nabbed the gentleman at last, have you. Did you have much trouble to take him?"

"No. It was a planned affair. The old landlord put me up to the affair—an old dog—but he'll be well paid for it—and I came upon them when they couldn't resist."

"Well," remarked the lock-up keeper, "I tell you what, you are an infernal shabby fellow if you don't stand handsomely all round, and make a happy night of it for once."

"I'll do it—but the prisoners must be looked to. I'm not going to lose such a bird for a gale."

"Oh, as to that—we ain't going to get drunk; besides, we can go in every half hour and see if they are all right, that will make your mind easy."



This was apparently well relished, and some liquor was sent for, and the officers commenced a carousal—drinking toasts—singing songs, and every now and then making an examination of the prisoners.

“Now,” remarked Claude, “the time to make our escape has come. Can you get your handcuffs off?”

“No,” said Jack. “And as for an escape, I don’t see the time or the means. It’s all up, Claude.”

“I never give in, Jack. If you can’t get your handcuffs off, I can,” and as he spoke he slipped his hands through his irons, which were somewhat too big, and then he removed Sixteen-string Jack’s.

“There,” said Claude, “now Jack, you must do as I do, and when the officers come in, rush upon them, and we must fight our way out.”

Jack made no reply, but followed Claude to the door, where they had not been a minute, before two of the officers came, and not seeing them in the place where they last saw them, they made a rush into the room.

Claude quickly got out, and Jack following, he drew the door to and secured it. “That lessens the number. Now for it, Jack, don’t flinch.”

The officers inside no sooner saw themselves shut in, than they guessed what was the matter, and gave the alarm. Three or four more presented themselves to prevent their flight, and shots were fired, but Claude threw both pair of handcuffs at their heads, and then flung himself upon them, seconded by Jack, who was rendered active by the prospect of escape, and they speedily overcame all opposition, not without blows, and then when outside the lock-up, Claude secured the door of that also, and in a few minutes more they were some hundred yards from the scene of their adventure.

"Where shall we find refuge now?" said Sixteen-string Jack.

"In London, of course," said Claude. "If you wish to lose your friends, or to evade your foes, let London be your place of refuge; but I am not going without Sue."

The door of the outhouse where the horses were confined, was well secured by a large padlock, but a stone of some half hundred weight, which happened to be lying in the road, furnished Claude with a ready means of smashing the fastenings.

Claude then gave a peculiar whistle, and in another moment there was a bustle in the stable, and out rushed Sue.

Claude caressed his steed for a moment; then plunging into the outhouse, he caught the first horse he could lay hands on for Jack, and in another minute they were off and away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was towards London that our adventurers took their course, and for more than a mile they galloped on at a speed which rendered conversation entirely out of the question. When, however, they got near to the end of Tottenham-court-road Claude relaxed his speed a little.

"Jack," he said, "you know as many places of safety in London as I do. Only name where you wish to go, and I will soon come to you."

"Can you not accompany me?" said Jack in a desponding tone.

"No; I have some one to make a visit to who is dearer to me than life itself."

"Must it be so?"

"Indeed it must. I am sorry to see you so much depressed. Rally yourself. Come, come, Jack, remember your former reputation. Why, there was not a knight of the road who could come near to you at one time, and now the merest tyro would get the better of you."

"It is true—it is true. But I have, alas! a secret which weighs down my spirits, but I will now delay my confession no longer."

"But you have nothing to confess to me."

"Yes, Claude, I have."

"Well—well, go on, then. Alas, poor fellow!" thought Claude to himself, "it is as I suspected, his wits have decidedly forsaken him. That hanging business has been the destruction of him, and it is a great pity the Jew doctor ever restored him to life again, after he had once shut his eyes upon this world."

"May I speak?" asked Jack.

"Oh, certainly. Come, now, Jack, tell me that you are having a jest with me, and I shall be well pleased to forgive you for it, although, just now, when many cares assail me, it is rather ill-timed."

"Jest!" repeated Sixteen-string Jack; "I shall never jest again."

"For Heaven's sake, then, tell me what you mean."

"There is such a person in the world as—as—oh, Claude, you will kill me."

"Now, Jack, you are positively provoking. What name is it, in the name of all that's troublesome, that sticks in your throat so?"

"The name is Cicely Brereton."

It may seem improbable that our heroes were so uniformly successful in their skirmishes with the officers, though generally very inferior in point of numbers. But this may mainly be attributed to the boldness and suddenness with which all their attacks were planned and executed; their mode

of life was such that they were always on the alert, and were never to be taken by surprise. To this must be added the fact, that as they were uniformly liberal to inn-keepers, hostlers, toll-keepers, and the poor people generally, they were always on the very best terms with these classes, who made it their pride to warn the Bold Highwaymen of any danger which threatened them. It thus happened that our heroes were almost always put upon their guard against any attempts upon their liberty; for no sooner did an officer make his appearance, than the wily inn-keeper set himself to work to discover his plans, and no sooner possessed the knowledge of them, than he hastened to forward his intelligence to Claude, whose whereabouts was generally known to some of his friends. Having thus accounted to the reader for what might otherwise appear improbable, we will proceed with the story.

Claude was so completely taken by surprise that he nearly fell off his horse, and as it was, he gave such a start that Sue was prodigiously alarmed, and made a bound that would have thrown a less practised rider. But the astonishment of Claude soon took a less exciting course, and in a voice of command, he said—

“What would you say of her? Speak, I charge you, Jack, quick!”

“I will tell you as quickly as I can. I know you will kill me when you do know all, but better to die by your hands after putting you upon your guard, than to live the life of misery which I now live. Have a little patience with me, and you shall know all.”

“The Jew to whom I owe my life came to me one day, and told me that it was an object to get a Mr. Markham Brereton, Cicely’s brother, executed for a supposed highway robbery, and that a Mr. Tom Brereton, her cousin would pay very handsomely for the job.”

“Go on, go on.”

“He said he was likely in the whole affair to be foiled by you, and that it was necessary to do something to render abortive any attempts of yours to save Mr. Markham. For this purpose he wanted a letter in a handwriting so strongly resembling yours that indifferent persons who knew your hand would swear to it as being yours, stating that you knew Mr. Markham had robbed Tom Brereton on the western road, but that you, in consequence of Cicely promising to elope with you, had made up your mind to take the responsibility of the robbery upon your own shoulders.

“They wanted some one to prepare the letter who knew your handwriting well enough to imitate it very exactly.”

“And you?”

“I—I—I did it! Do you not abhor me? Do you not look upon me as one accursed?”

“No; from the bottom of my heart you have my pity. I can feel towards you no otherwise. Oh, Jack, how you have fallen off from what you were. I would rather have stood the fire of a troop of soldiers, each intent upon my destruction, than I would have heard such a tale from your lips. Go on—go on.”

“This Jew, whose powers seem to be actually superhuman, told me that he had discovered where you had placed Cicely.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, he said that he should have her in his power by this morning. He obscurely hinted that you as yet did not know the value of your prize; for that the girl had become, by the death of some one in India, entitled to enormous wealth, which he and Tom Brereton intended to share between them.”

Claude stood for a moment, and then placing his hand upon the shoulder of Jack, he said—

“Cicely, Cicely, more of her; can I save her from falling into the hands of that monster?”

“I spoke of making what reparation I could, and I will do so. The letter I

speak of is in the hands of the Governor of Newgate, and Cicely is to be met by me and conducted to the Jew's house within half an hour of this time. A sham message from you, accompanied by a suit of boy's clothing, has been sent to her, and she will be at the end of Oxford street by seven this morning."

Claude without waiting to hear more, suddenly turned his horse's head up Oxford street, and, at a furious pace, went towards the spot where he had been told Cicely would meet him. The top of Oxford street was soon gained, and then he paused and looked most anxiously around him, but no figure that he could tell himself was Cicely's met his gaze. So, after some thought and some waiting, he made up his mind to walk quietly down the road, in the hope of meeting Cicely.

Scarcely had he got a quarter of a mile when he heard a cry for help, and as some tall trees, just where the road turned a little, prevented him now from seeing above forty yards in advance of him, he put Sue to a gallop, and soon cleared the distance, and came upon a group of persons most unexpectedly.

Two men were holding a youth, who was crying aloud for help. Could Claude for one moment mistake the accents of that voice? It was that of his Cicely.

To fling himself from his horse was the work of a moment. The strength of twenty men seemed to nerve his arms, and seizing the two ruffians in either hand, he, by one vigorous movement, knocked their heads together with a sound that was quite blood-curdling to hear.

They fell at his feet both of them in a state of insensibility. In another moment Cicely was in his arms, and he pressed her to his heart.

"Oh, I have been so terrified," she exclaimed; "they said you would come."

"And that I am here, Cicely, is something almost like a miracle, the circumstances of which I will tell you another time, but I have now a much more important question to ask of you, Cicely, and it is one which I hope you will answer me at once with candor."

"I will, indeed."

"Will you be my wife, Cicely?"

There was a moment's pause, then it was in a soft, low whisper, that Cicely replied, "I am already yours, Claude. My fortunes are your fortunes."

"Yes, Cicely. And with my life I will for ever stand between you and all harm."

"Ah, Claude, under what frightful circumstances our union will take place. Are you not proscribed among men? Is there not a price set upon your life?"

"Yes. But with you as my guardian angel, I shall triumph yet."

"And my brother. You will still save my brother. You will still remember that he is innocent of that which is imputed to him, and although he may for a time look coldly upon us, and deem that I have done an act which should alienate me from his affections, he will think better of it, and we shall not mourn the loss of his affections. You will save him, Claude? But you must not sacrifice yourself. No, no, you must even let Markham perish, rather than your life shall fall a sacrifice to those who will look for vengeance upon some one."

"Be tranquil," said Claude; "all will be well. My life has now a value, which will induce me to take extraordinary care of it. Be calm, Cicely."

They proceeded onwards now for some time in silence, but it was that description of silence which is in reality more eloquent than any words could possibly be, for heart spoke to heart, and an occasional glance from the eyes of each sufficiently exemplified what were the thoughts passing in the brain, and how weak and inefficient language would be to the expression.

Claude, at length broke the silence, saying,

"Cicely, what say you to a scheme I have now, for the purpose of making you really and truly my own? There is a clergyman, who resides not far

from here, and who has the power to marry us, if he had the will to perform the ceremony."

"Would he be induced, Claude?"

"Not by anything we could say, in the way of entreaty, you may depend, Cicely. But I will explain:—This haughty prelate and I have met before now, and no doubt he has a lively recollection of that meeting. I am induced to think so from the significant fact, that he has offered one hundred pounds reward to any one who will lodge me in Newgate."

"Is that possible, Claude?"

"It is both possible and true, Cicely. He has a personal quarrel with me, of no light character, I assure you, and I will therefore take this opportunity of being obliged to him for a favor."

"A favor?"

"Yes. When I want a man to do anything for me, the consequence of which may not be altogether pleasant for him, or tell well for his courage, I go to an enemy—and therefore I mean to make this bishop marry us."

"A bishop?"

"Oh, yes. The bishop of Exeter shall perform the service, if he be in London, which I think he is. But it is necessary that I make some alteration in my costume."

The back portion of the saddle of Sue had a small recess in it, which was just sufficient to hold some flimsy articles of apparel, chiefly made of silk, so that they should go into a very small compass; but it was quite wonderful, when Claude had put them on, to see the effect, in the way of disguise, which they had upon him.

"I should not know you, Claude," said Cicely.

"Except by my voice?"

"Oh, yes, I should know your voice in a moment, Claude."

"Not always," cried Claude.

Cicely started, for in the utterance of those words he had so altered his mode of speaking, that she thought some one close at hand had uttered them. "You must always say something," added Cicely, "which shall let me be able to penetrate your disguises, or I shall be very unhappy."

"Yes, Cicely, I will always say something by which you may know me; and be assured, that however I may change and assume many Protean shapes I will never change to you."

"I believe it—I believe it, and it is in that belief that I will find my joy. Where are we going now, Claude? These are handsome houses."

"Yes. In one of these lives our friend, the bishop, or rather our enemy the bishop, whom we shall make do a friendly act without a friendly motive."

They had now turned down a street to the left of Oxford-street, and which conducted them to a square of the most aristocratic aspect and importance. Claude deliberately paused before a large house, the front of which was dignified by a remarkably heavy portico. It was the town abode of the well-known bishop, with whose lady Claude had danced upon Hampstead Heath, the amusing account of which was given in a previous Chapter.

The door of the mansion was open, and a footman was lounging at it, in an attitude which showed what a trouble it was to him to support the great weight of dignity that belonged to him and the office.

When Claude paused before the door, he scarcely deigned to look at him, and it was not until Cicely and the highwayman had dismounted that the official gentleman deigned to turn his eyes upon them, in an easy sort of way.

"The bishop," said Claude, "is he up?"

"Ahem! Did you say, up?"

"Yes."

"Oh, very well; then I don't know."

"Very well. I have a proposal to make to you, which deserves your serious

attention. Will you take half-a-crown to go and inquire, or will you have your nose pulled for refusing to do so?"

"Well, sir, I can only say, that I am not a man to be bullied, or made game of. Nobody ever did that with me; and as to being frightened into anything, it's not in my nature, so if you please, sir, give me the half-crown."

"You are a cleverer fellow than you look," said Claude, "and I improve consequently upon my terms. There are two half-crowns, and now, if you can get speech of the bishop, just say that there is a gentleman at the door who will place Claude Duval, the highwayman, in his hands, and ask no reward for doing so."

"He'll see you, sir, if he were ten times over not up—but I think he is. Just step into that room, and I'll manage it. I dare say I shall get something for myself out of him for bringing such good news."

Claude and Cicely were both shown into a handsome reception room to the right of the hall, and there they both waited with some natural degree of anxiety the return of the footman.

In about five minutes the footman returned, followed by a slim, sleek-looking personage, dressed in black, and with a perpetual hyena-like smile upon his white face, which he intended should be evangelically beautiful. This was the bishop's secretary.

"So," he said, "I understand that you know something of Claude Duval?"

"Much," replied Claude.

"Well, the bishop presents his compliments, and will feel obliged at your following me to his presence."

A handsome staircase was ascended, the balustrades of which were profusely gilt, while the walls were hung with pictures, some of which were of anything but a saintly character. The carpet, too, was so soft and beautiful, that any of the apostles, a humble follower of whom of course the bishop was, would have been perfectly astonished, and thought such things could only be in that world beyond the stars, which his faith promised him the enjoyment of in another state of existence. But, then, bishops are so self-denying, so anxious to walk in the footsteps of their great Teacher, as all the world, of course, knows of all the bishops.

On the landing was some rare and exquisite statuary, upon which Claude could not help casting a passing glance of admiration, and then a door, the panels of which were of mahogany, and the corners gilt, was opened, and the bishop was found sitting at a table, writing, or pretending to write. Claude, with Cicely clinging to his arm, now stood in the presence of the bishop, who looked rather scrutinisingly upon them as he said,

"Can you give me information, indeed, of the notorious Claude Duval?"

"I can."

"Pray be seated. My time is rather valuable, and I have to request that you will be so good as to say, as quickly as possible, what you have to say."

"I have as little desire as your lordship can have," said Claude, "to occupy valuable time; I have much to do, and therefore cannot afford to waste my opportunities. Will your lordship tell me candidly if any one be listening?"

"Certainly not. You may proceed in perfect confidence."

"Well, my lord, you see this small, exquisitely-mounted pistol, which never misses fire, and carries a couple of bullets with the greatest steadiness. Well, my lord, I took it from the secret pocket of Claude Duval's coat."

"And did he permit you, or had you taken him prisoner—perhaps killed him? I should like to hang the rascal. Oh, that I could see him before me."

"A wish easily gratified. I am Claude Duval—nay, my lord, I shall trouble you to be seated. Remember this little weapon and its qualifications. You wished to see Claude Duval before you without the necessity of paying a hundred pounds, and you have your wish. Remove your hand from that bell-pull, my lord, or I fire."

The bishop hastily enough took his hand off the bell-pull, and sunk back

into his chair again, from whence he had suddenly risen in the alarm of the moment.

"This overwhelming assurance!" gasped the bishop—

"Cannot be without an object more distinct and important," added Claude, "than merely frightening a bishop. I have a motive far higher. This young lady, for a young lady she is, despite her male attire, has agreed to make me so happy as to become my wife; the only return I ask of you for bringing you Claude Duval without any reward, is that you marry us forthwith."

"I cannot."

"Very well," and Claude deliberately cocked the pistol.

"That is to say, stop," said the bishop. "I think I will, although it is contrary to my usage. I—I really ought not. God bless me I wish some one would come, I never was in such a horrid situation."

"And I never in such a pleasant one."

The bishop groaned.

"I—I don't think I can remember a word of the service," he faltered. "Indeed, I am quite sure I cannot, I don't often marry people; but if I must, I must, so I'll go for my book at once."

"If it be in this room you may get it—if in another I will go with you; and remember, upon the least appearance of treachery on your part, or even if I suspect you wrongfully, I will blow your brains out."

The bishop groaned again. Then he rose and went to a book-case, from whence he took a Book of Common Prayer, and at that moment the sickly-looking supercilious secretary came into the room.

"My lord, I—"

"Will give away the bride," cried Claude, finishing the sentence for him, and at the same time seizing him by the collar, and flinging him into a corner of the room, where he sat propped up by the wall, looking the picture of fright and surprise. Claude now walked to the door and locked it, saying as he did so, "We don't want any one else, so now proceed at once. Cicely is the name of the lady, and with my christian appellation you are already acquainted. Proceed my lord."

"Dearly beloved," said the bishop with another groan, for the idea of being forced to marry Claude Duval was gall and wormwood to him, and his thoughts were wandering to what the wicked wits of the time would say, should the affair get wind among them. More than once he thought of breaking off abruptly in the midst of the service, but as often as the thought came over him to do so, and he looked up from the prayer book, his eyes were dazzled by a sight of that provoking bright pistol barrel, to which Claude had given such commendations, and with another groan, he would resume.

Thus it was that Claude and Cicely were made man and wife.

The ring with which Cicely was married was one that had belonged to Claude's mother, and which he had until that occasion, worn constantly upon his little finger. The dubious-looking secretary gave the bride away, and then shrunk back into his corner again, where he thought it prudent to remain, until watching his opportunity, he crept under a table, and so on to the door, and fairly escaped from the room.

It may be presumed that Claude did not notice the absence of the secretary till it was too late to prevent it. Cicely saw a flush of color suddenly visit his cheek, but she did not attribute it to any apprehension. Claude himself, however, the moment he became aware that the secretary was gone, knew his danger.

Turning to the bishop, he said—"My lord, you have done me a service, and I do not see why you should cherish the unchristian resentment against me that you do. I must, however, despite that, make you useful to a yet greater extent. I think I must trouble you, to accompany me down stairs."

The sight of the pistol again stopped all scruples, and down stairs they went together. The moment they gained the passage, the street-door opened, and

the secretary appeared looking quite triumphant, although, owing to suddenly confronting Claude, he was a little cut up in his gratification. Duval took but one step towards him; and then looking keenly in his face, he said, in a perfectly calm tone—"Will they be here soon?"

"Who—who—do you mean?" stammered the secretary.

"Oh, pho! The officers you have been for."

"Seize him," said the bishop.

"Hold!" said Claude, as he held the bishop's arm with a grip of iron—"hold! I know that I shall be taken, because I think you are angry enough now, and fierce enough to sacrifice your life for this object. I have sworn to myself to take your life, or to leave this house in safety; and, by all that is sacred on earth or in Heaven, I will keep my oath."

"Go in peace," said the bishop, with a shudder, "go in peace."

"Order your carriage, then, and come with me. I will do you no harm, but you must say it is a mistake of your officious secretary, and that I am a friend of yours—or—your life!"

The bishop had now no disposition to sacrifice his life, after going so far, and he readily enough complied with Claude's wishes, that he should get into the carriage. In another moment they were all three seated in the luxurious vehicle, that is, its owner, Claude and Cicely.

The footman touched his hat as he shut the door, and lingered to know where to drive to.

"The Cat and Cucumber in Drury Lane," said Claude.

"The what, sir?"

"The 'Cat and Cucumber,' in Drury Lane."

"Yes sir—oh yes.—A-hem! Certainly, my lord. The Cat and—a-hem—Cucumber, in Drury Lane."

The footman perked up his nose, as though there had been something noxious at the extreme end of it, which he was afraid would fall into his mouth, unless he was very careful, and then mounting behind, he gave the order to the astounded coachman.

There was another person, however, who heard the order where to drive to with some gratification, and that other was one of the officers the secretary had summoned, who accordingly jumped up behind the coach, resolved to see the end of the adventure. As may be supposed, the bishop was rather ill at ease in his carriage with such company, but he dissembled his feelings the best way he could, and the vehicle soon reached the classic regions of Drury Lane.

An inquiry or two on the part of the still ireful footman soon discovered the Cat and Cucumber, and probably never before in the annals of the establishment, could be recounted such a visit as was now paid to it. Claude alighted, and handed out Cicely. The officer sprung from behind, and laying his hand upon Claude's arm, said—"You are my prisoner."

"By what authority?" said Claude.

"The law. I know you are Duval."

"And how came you here?"

"At the back of the carriage."

"That must have been uncomfortable. You shall return inside, which I assure you is as convenient as it can possibly be made. It is not everybody who would do so much for you."

As he spoke, Claude put forth all the herculean strength which he possessed, and which only upon extraordinary occasions he called into exercise. Lifting the officer off his feet, he at once dashed him into the carriage, and closed the door. In another moment he was in the public-house called the "Cat and Cucumber," with Cicely.

To the first person he met, Claude said—"Go to the door. You will find that my horse has followed me, although I came in a coach."

That was literally true. Sue had indeed followed the bishop's carriage, which the sagacious creature had seen contained her master, and now stood waiting for him at the door of the public-house. He had to show himself,

Before she would allow herself to be removed. The officer, however, by this time had managed, after doing some amount of personal damage to the bishop, to scramble out of the carriage, and, mad with anger and shame at his defeat he rushed into the public-house.

"What do you want, Fletcher?" said the landlord, advancing.

"Claude Duval."

"You know as well as I do that you can't have him here. Come, come, be wise and be off. Keep what sort of watch you like outside, but here, as you are well aware, it is an understood thing you are not to make prisoners. It won't do, Fletcher, so don't try it on."

"Confusion!"

"Oh, that's likely enough; but you know what's right, as well as I do, so get along with you, unless you choose to come in the regular way, and make yourself comfortable and look about you a bit."

"I must take him."

"Nonsense, you have your regulars, you know as well as I do, so don't make a fool of yourself.—Will you take anything to drink?"

This last was a proposition that had a mollifying effect upon the officer, whose rage had cooled down sufficiently to convince him that a row at the "Cat and Cucumber," for the purpose of trying to make a prisoner, would be the most ineffectual thing in all the world.

He took the something to drink, and left the place.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XXXII.

PROCEED we now to the trial of Markham Brereton, who had been confined in Newgate, on the false accusation of his cousin Tom, on a charge of robbery, which robbery, he well knew had been perpetrated by Claude; but it suited his views upon the person of Cicely, to deprive her of the support of her brother, and thus leave her an easy prey to his machinations, or else force her into becoming his wife as the price of her brother's liberty.

Of course Tom had a sufficient motive for all this, and that motive was as follows:—There had been a third brother in the Brereton family, who had gone abroad to better his condition, and it appeared that he bettered it in an extraordinary degree, for he became a very rich man indeed, and, when on his death-bed, he had chosen to leave the bulk of his fortune to Cicely his niece, merely because she was named Cicely.

This was a fact that had come to the ears of Tom, through a low attorney who acted for him, and who was named Newcourt; and then arose between them the anxious question of what could be made of this knowledge, before the executors of the deceased Mr. James Brereton became energetic in taking means to carry out the conditions of his will.

It was thought that if a marriage could be knocked up between Tom and Cicely, it would answer all the purposes, and the attorney got from him a contingent bond for £10,000 as his share of the plunder, in case the marriage should be brought about.

The great affection subsisting between Cicely and her brother was well known, and it was thought that by playing upon her fears, she might be forced into a consent to the marriage, and so save him.

Hence, then, the attorney, Newcourt, had made every exertion to get up the evidence in such a way as to envelope Markham in its folds, while at any time, provided Cicely consented to what was proposed to her, he could back out of the prosecution by pretending he had found out that he was mistaken in the identity of the robber who had deprived Tom of his property.

The sudden and most mysterious disappearance of Cicely somewhat discomfited the plotters, but still as the criminal proceedings against Markham

would be public enough, they thought that if anything could possibly make Cicely show herself, they would.

From the first, the attorney, taking the scanty and limited view of human nature incidental to his profession and in accordance with the impulses of his own mind, had not for one moment imagined that any danger was to be apprehended from the appearance of Claude at the trial, inasmuch as for him to come there would compromise his own safety.

Lawyers and such clients as Tom Brereton cannot very well comprehend the motives that actuate such men as Claude Duval.

Poor Cicely, now actually wedded to Claude, awaited, in concealment, most anxiously the termination of an affair which involved the safety and happiness of the two beings most dear to her in the world.

Such, then, was the state of things upon that eventful morning, when Markham Brereton was to be put upon his trial for an offence of which no one could be more innocent.

The trial and the style of evidence which went towards the production of its result, sufficiently showed what has often been much insisted upon, namely, how easy it is, upon the most slender, and apparently upon the most inefficient train of circumstances, to place an innocent man in a position of the most exceeding peril.

Thus far having made certain conditions of circumstances clear and intelligible to the reader, we at once proceed with the incidents of our tale in due order.

Claude having so fortunately rescued Cicely from the trap prepared for her, and in which Sixteen-string Jack had assisted, felt but little disposed to visit him with much indignation; he therefore sought him out, and found him to be very repentant for his treachery, and anxious to make amends by assisting Claude in the liberation of Markham. Claude then directed him to disguise himself as effectually as he could, and to make his way to a certain coffee-house in the Old Bailey, where he would speedily join him.

There can be no doubt but that he and Claude were quite as safe, if not safer, from any danger of being known, in the Old Bailey, than anywhere; for who would for a moment have expected to find either of them there?

The very existence, too, of Sixteen-string Jack was unknown, so that even a fancied strong resemblance would have failed to induce any of the officers to say anything to him.

Jack, when he got into the coffee-room of the inn, found that much of the conversation of the parties there was upon the expected trial of Markham Brereton, and, knowing as he did from Claude, the real truth of the affair, he was both amazed and confused at the different versions he heard from various persons of the story.

"Alas!" he thought, "I much fear, indeed, that poor Claude will, with his romantic feeling, consider himself called upon to make some dreadful sacrifice, in pursuance of his promise to his sister May and to Cicely, that, at all risks, he will save Markham."

At this moment, a gentlemanly-looking man, attired in rather ecclesiastical-looking garments, made his appearance, and, after glancing round the room, took a seat close to Sixteen-string Jack.

"Sir," said the stranger "are you able to tell me at what hour the trials come on opposite?"

"At nine," said Jack.

Now Jack fully meant by a short, brusque manner, to stop any further conversation, but the new-comer had either too much obstinacy, or too much perseverance, to be so put off, and he looked earnestly at Jack, saying—

"I think, sir, I have heard your voice before?"

Sixteen-string Jack felt the perspiration break out upon his forehead, as he replied as firmly as he could—

"I do not think it possible, sir, I am a stranger here."

"Humph!" said the ecclesiastical-looking personage. "The more I look at you the more convinced am I that I know you."

"Pray then, sir, for whom do you take me?"

"For Sixteen-string Jack, the notorious highwayman."

These last words were spoken in Claude's natural tone, and Jack then for the first time knew him.

"Good God," he said, "is it possible that you have the faculty, Claude, of thus effectually disguising yourself?"

"Yes, Jack, I almost think I must have such a faculty, since it seems that even you did not know me; but it gives me the satisfaction of feeling that my disguise is very perfect—I must leave you now and go over to the court at once, for Breton's trial will assuredly come on."

The court of the Old Bailey was densely crowded. Markham Breton was very pale, but he was firm, and in his aspect there seemed a struggling indignation, that he with difficulty kept down, while the clerk of the arraigns was gabbling over the words of the indictment in the manner incidental to such official characters.

When asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty to the indictment, he replied in a clear loud voice—"Not guilty, and they who institute this prosecution well know it."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "you are adopting a foolish course. That was not the proper manner of pleading to the indictment."

"Not the usual manner, you mean, sir," said Markham; "let conscious guilt or slavish fear, cringe and whisper, but conscious innocence will speak out."

"You do yourself an injury."

"Which it is for the jury to decide and not the judge," said Markham, in a tone of voice that did not exactly please the recorder, who, however, made no further remark, but allowed the trial to proceed at once.

A notoriously unscrupulous barrister was retained for the prosecution, and every device that could be conceived of was employed to prove him guilty. But as the details would be of no interest to our readers, we will pass at once to the defence and its consequences.

The Attorney-General rose, amid the most marked silence of the court, and commenced the defence.

"My lords and gentlemen of the jury," he said, "I must confess that I came into this court with a strong feeling upon my mind that there really was something like presumptive proof of the guilt of the prisoner at the bar to be fought against, and that the evidence would be such as to seem to carry with it a probability of his participation in the crime of which he is accused. But, gentlemen, no doubt you are equally surprised with me at the glaring want of common, every-day, presumptive evidence in this case, so cruelly and scandalously got up against an innocent man. It was to be expected, gentleman, that the footsteps of Mr. Markham Breton would almost have been reckoned from the night in question. It was to be expected that if there was a difficulty in saying positively he was at the robbery, there would have been an attempt to prove that he was nowhere else; but, on the contrary, what does the evidence for the prosecution amount to? It is rather a strange thing, gentlemen of the jury, that the evidence for the prosecution divides itself in the most natural way in the world into two portions—one portion that can be believed, and one that cannot. What is true is favorable to the prisoner, and what is false is not. All that was with difficulty wrung by my assistant and myself from the perjured witnesses for the prosecution was favorable to the prisoner, and so diabolical an attempt to torture and transfigure the truth, I never, during the whole course of my experience, met with in a court of justice. But to return to our question—what does the evidence amount to? Look at it fairly, and it comes to this, and no more. An attack is made by a highwayman upon a carriage, and the conclusion you are sought to be persuaded to come to is, that the attack was made by Markham Breton. You are to be told that having,

accidentally, mind, been compelled to ride to London, he then conceives the idea of robbing his cousin; a scarlet coat, white breeches, boots, and lace cravat, fall upon him, one must suppose, from the skies, and he is equipped as a knight of the road. Can anything be a greater insult to the understanding of Englishmen than this? Well, but the identity of Markham Brereton, we are told, with the highwayman, is duly and distinctly sworn to. It is—but by whom? By Tom Brereton, a man whose whole evidence was a complication of perjuries; by a man who, as sure as I live, shall be indicted for perjury, before this session is over; by a man who for cowardice, cringing manners, and rascality, scarcely has his equal. Gentlemen, I look upon the prosecutor's case as so complete a failure, that I am certain I might safely leave the affair in your hands at this point; but, nevertheless, I will call some witnesses, who will further satisfy you. Call Job Harley."

A most singular-looking specimen of humanity was pushed into the box and duly sworn. He wore a rough great coat, and had an enormous red face, with a profusion of whiskers.

"Well, Job, do you keep the turnpike gate at Acton Green?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you remember on the night named in the indictment—the 17th—any one of a noticeable character passing through the gate?"

"To be sure, I do."

"Who was it?"

"Claude Duval, the highwayman, on his bay mare, to be sure. He went through at a sharp trot, and I said to myself—'Look out, whoever happens to be upon the road with a well-filled purse.'"

"Have you any doubt about its being him?"

"Lord bless, you, no. I know him as well as I know myself. It was Claude, and no mistake, as was on the Western road that night; and, besides, he came back again, and then I saw him, too."

"Very well, that is sufficient for me, Mr. Job. I shall not trouble you any further."

"Stop a moment," said the counsel for the prosecution, as Job was about to leave the box, "stop a bit; I have a few words to say to you."

"Speak up, then."

"You say you frequently saw Claude Duval, the highwayman, pass your gate. Now, did you ever make an effort to apprehend him?"

"Apprehend him? I apprehend him? Well, that's a good 'un. What's it to me, who goes through the gate? If I was to stop all the rogues I see, I should have enough to do."

"Then do you mean to tell me that, knowing a man is going on an errand of robbery and pillage, you would let him go in peace?"

"Yes. You are a lawyer, ain't you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, I'd let you go through any time."

A laugh ran through the crowd, during which the counsel sat down, finding that nothing was to be made of the turnpike-keeper.

"Call May Russel," said the Attorney-General.

Markham started and turned pale, and there was a visible stir of curiosity in the court, when May was handed in the witness-box to be sworn. Her beauty won all hearts, and the state of agitation she was in, only imparted a greater interest to her personal appearance.

"Permit me to ask you if Russel is your real name?"

"It is not."

There was a visible sensation in court, and Markham buried his face in his hands; for he could not bear to look upon that face, which he had so often pictured to himself in dreams as all that was beautiful, with now a flush of shame upon it.

"What is your name?"

"May Duval!"

"Then you are the sister of Claude Duval, the highwayman?"

"I am Claude's unhappy sister."

"How came you the friend and companion of the Breretons?"

"They took me in from charity, knowing me not. I called myself Russel. They gave me a home full of kindness—God bless them! God will bless them for it."

"Those are actions which are not forgotten. Now tell us if you know anything of this robbery upon Ealing Common of Mr. Tom Brereton?"

"The coach was stopped."

"By whom?"

"By my brother."

"You are certain?"

"Do I not know him? There is not a feature, not a slight trick of voice or gesture, that is unknown to me. As I stand before God, it was Claude who stopped the carriage, and only Claude."

The Attorney-General intimated that he had no more to say to May, and the counsel for the prosecution rose to cross-examine her.

"So," he said, "you are the sister of Claude Duval?"

"I have said so!"

"And you have a sneaking kindness for the prisoner at the bar?"

May's countenance flushed for a moment, but she made no reply.

"I insist upon an answer."

"Which," said the Attorney-General, "I feel bound to say, in defence of my witness, you cannot do, nor will the court aid you."

"Oh, very well, very well, I will take it for granted. I suppose, Miss Duval, you are aware that your worthy brother has committed numerous robberies, and probably you think that to clap one which he did not commit upon his shoulders, will do him no harm, and your lover much good. Can you tell me where Miss Cicely Brereton is?"

"No."

"Very well; you can go down, my dear."

"Thoroughly vexed and embittered, far beyond anything she had ever before felt in the shape of anger, May left the witness box. As yet the cross-examination had been a complete failure, and the Attorney-General looked with a smike at the junior counsel, as much as to say, our learned friend on the opposite side is particularly unhappy to-day.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OH, what a relief it was to May to find herself once more on the floor of the court, and out of the witness box, where, to her perception, every other word that was uttered to her came in the shape of an insult. She scarcely heard that the next person called was Cicely Brereton. The name was vociferated through the court, but there was no response, and the Attorney-General said—"I only had a hope that this witness would make her appearance, but it seems that hope was a fallacious one, and I now leave the case in the hands of the jury."

The Attorney-General sat down, and the counsel for the prosecution rose.

"I have very few remarks to make," he said. "My learned friend looks for an acquittal triumphantly, and if the case was as the case seems, probably he would not be disappointed; but I have, I must say, too great a reliance upon the common sense of Englishmen to believe for one moment that they will allow themselves to be hoodwinked by the pretty little romance of the defence in this case. The prisoner commits a robbery, and Claude Duval fathers it. If Claude Duval should chance to be apprehended next week, perhaps the prisoner at the bar will have the kindness to own to the case brought against him. Gentlemen, I know I can leave the case entirely in your

hands, with confidence as to the result, for however Mr. Tom Brereton may not have succeeded in winning upon your sympathies, still he is not upon that account to be robbed upon the highway with impunity, nor are a few inconsistencies in evidence, elicited by the tact of counsel, in a cross examination, to invalidate broad and startling facts. Of course the advancement of justice is the first consideration of us all, and I sincerely hope that your verdict will vindicate the law."

The counsel sat down, having said all he could say to damage the defence, although by the initiated it was well enough perceived that he had no great fancy for his own case, and no great reliance upon its strength. All that remained now of routine proceeding, was that the judge should sum up the case to the jury, and every one in the court was on the rack of anxiety to listen to what he would say, and the turn he would give to the evidence that had been adduced upon both sides of the question. He commenced in a low voice—

"The prisoner at the bar stands charged with the robbery of certain papers and documents from the person of Mr. Thomas Brereton on the king's highway, on the evening of the 17th of the last month. It appears in evidence that a coach in which the prosecutor, with some ladies, was travelling, was stopped upon Ealing Common, and the robbery which forms the subject of the indictment was effected by the prisoner at the bar, or some one so resembling him, as to induce the prosecutor to swear that he was the person. It cannot fail to be observed that the whole case resolves itself into questions of personal veracity and personal identity. The defence has laboured to prove that the prosecutor is either perjured or mistaken, both rather serious allegations, and they prefer much the former, which is of course by far the most serious of the two. Thomas Brereton swears distinctly, and without reservation, to the identity of the prisoner with the person who robbed him upon Ealing Common, and another witness, Miss Duval, swears as distinctly, that the robber was no other than Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman. It will be the duty of the jury to endeavor to come to some sort of conclusion between the conflicting testimony of the prosecutor, whose character no one has attacked, and this young woman, who if she be herself immaculate, certainly is most unfortunate in her immediate connexions. Between the conflicting testimony it is for you, gentlemen of the jury, to decide, always bearing in mind that the prisoner at the bar is not to be found guilty upon any other assumption than that he was, *de facto*, the robber of Ealing Common, and upon the special occasion, recited and specified in the bill of indictment. If you believe Mr. Thomas Brereton on his oath, your duty lies quite clearly and evenly before you, for then you can do nothing but find the prisoner guilty, according to your oaths upon taking your places in that box. The case is before you, gentlemen, and the court waits your decision upon the question submitted to you."

The charge to the jury was over, and although it was rather of a rambling and discursive character, no one could take upon himself actually to say that it was unfair, notwithstanding there was an evident leaning to the belief that the prisoner was guilty. The judge, however, in that stage of the proceedings, had as much right to his opinion as any one else. There was a buzz and a hum of conversation in the court.

"Silence!" shouted the crier.

All was still again, and the jury with puzzled and anxious looks, began to lay their heads together.

"You can retire, gentlemen, if it is your wish to do so," said the clerk of the arraigns, looking hard at the jury as he spoke.

"No," said the foreman, "we think we shall soon agree."

This announcement kept every one in the court motionless, and the recorder, who had partially risen to leave the court, under the impression, when the clerk of the arraigns spoke, that the jury was about to retire, resumed his seat again, and composed himself to a little patient waiting. At length, there

was a slight stir in the jury-box, and the members faced the court. Silence was loudly called for, and amid the breathless attention of all present, the clerk of the arraigns said, "Gentlemen of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict in the case now before you?"

"We are," replied the foreman, faintly.

"Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

The short pause that followed was dreadful. It seemed as though the foreman of the jury could not find voice to speak—as though, like Macbeth's amen, the word stuck in his throat. At length, by what was evidently an effort to him of no common character, he said, "Guilty!"

From what had already taken place, this verdict of guilty might have been expected by every one in court, and yet, what a wonderful sensation it really produced; proving what has often been asserted by those who know human nature and its habitudes, viz., that, however we may fancy we are prepared for an event, we never in reality are so. A strange kind of groan burst from the body of spectators. Their sympathies had from the first evidently been in favor of Markham Brereton. The evidence against him had not been respectable. The conduct of the judge had not been impartial. No wonder, then, that most of them who had remained during the whole of the proceedings had become strongly impressed in favor of the prisoner. The countenance of the recorder when the groans came from the people, first grew red and then nearly of a purple color.

"I cannot believe it to be possible," he said, "that the officers of this court are unable to lay hands upon some one who is the cause of this disturbance, or some of it."

This was a direct challenge to the officers to produce somebody, and no wonder that they became energetic accordingly. Now, upon those who knew the prisoner well the effect of course of the verdict was far more perceptible than upon strangers. A kind of half-stifled cry had burst from the lips of May, that attracted some special observation to her, and then she clasped her face in her hands, and was as still as the very grave; she guessed what was going to happen. The effect of the verdict upon Markham, was, that a look of indignation spread itself over his face, and he stood more erect than before, in the bar, confronting those who had done him such injustice. By this time, however, the officers, who found, from the words of the recorder, that their reputation was at stake if they did not produce somebody, hustled about, and laid hold, of course, of the first person they could meet with, and hauled him forward as the author of the tumult that had made the recorder so indignant.

"Murder! murder!" cried Tom Brereton, whom they had, in their haste to catch somebody, right or wrong, laid hold of by the throat, and were half-throttling. "Murder! It was not me."

It was quite evident, even to the recorder, that Tom Brereton was not the disturber, and he would have been set at liberty, had not a charge of perjury been brought against him by the Attorney-General.

"I know who it was," said Tom.

"It was a big fellow, who was close by me, but I don't see him now. He certainly was there this minute."

"If you see him again, call the officer and give him into custody. These interruptions are evidently quite systematic. It is truly surprising how the friends of the unhappy man at the bar, can fancy such a course will be of any possible service to him."

"I am not unhappy," said Markham. "You, rather, are the unhappy judge upon the bench, than I the unhappy man at the bar, for you are, knowingly or unknowingly, committing a great injustice, while I am only suffering one."

Markham ceased speaking.

"Have you said all that you wish to say?" said the recorder.

"All that I care to say now," replied Markham.

"Then it——?"

"A witness! a witness!" cried a loud voice from among the dense crowd in the centre of the court.

So completely was everybody taken by surprise at this sudden and extraordinary interruption, that the speaker, whoever he was, had for some moments everything his own way. The judge first revived from the surprise of the sudden interruption, when it was thought all interruption was past.

"Seize that man!" he cried.

As he spoke he pointed to a tall personage in the crowd, and the officers made a rush forward, but the man by no means showed any disposition to avoid them. On the contrary, he pressed forward, and finally confronted the judge, saying as he did so—"A witness! a witness!"

It was Claude himself.

"No, no, no!" cried May Duval, for she knew her brother, despite the disguise he was in, and at that moment her fears got the better of all other feelings—she fancied that she almost saw his sacrifice.

"What do you want?" said the judge.

"I have testimony to give, in favor of the prisoner at the bar." As he spoke, he ascended the two steps that led to the witness-box, and then, the court could see him plainly; no one, however, but his sister and Markham recognised him, or had the least suspicion that they were looking upon so celebrated a character as Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman.

"Swear him," said the recorder.

"There is no need," said Claude. "The character of the testimony I come to give, will carry with it amply sufficient its own verification; not all the oaths in the world could make its truth more apparent, or for one instant shall it. I tell the court that I was present at the robbery."

"You saw it committed!" said the Attorney General; "what objection can you have to be sworn?"

"It is scarcely an objection. After I am sworn in, you will not ask for my evidence. Let me say at once that I was present at the robbery as a principal."

"A principal?"

"Yes."

"Then you did it—and are——"

"Claude Duval!"

Certainly if a bombshell had suddenly entered the court, it would not have created a greater sensation, although it might have made one of a different description, than did the sudden and unexpected declaration of a name that certainly nobody expected. Even the judge gave a slight start. Tom Brereton made an effort to leave the court, but the officers held him firm.

"Close the doors," cried the judge. "Let no one depart. Officers, is there no one among you who can depose to the identity of this person with Claude Duval the highwayman, or not?"

The officers crowded forward with looks of intense chagrin. Here was the very man they had been so anxious to lay hold of, and upon whose capture three hundred pounds had depended, fairly by his own act in the clutches of the authorities, and nobody the gainer.

"They don't know me," said Claude; "but there is one here who can swear to me. May!"

"Claude—Claude!"

"Are you satisfied, my lord, that I am the veritable Claude Duval? If not, I have another proof."

"What is it?"

Claude glanced round him, and with a slight curl of his lip, he replied in a loud defiant tone—

"Who but Claude Duval would do this act? What other knight of the road, think ye, would place his own neck in a noose for the purpose of pushing out another man's? Is it like or is it not like what you have heard of Claude



Duval, who never robbed a poor man in his life, but who has relieved the necessities of many and many a one?"

A general clapping of hands now ensued in court, and it was actually renewed three times, despite the frowns of the recorder, and the bewildered manner in which the officers tried to take everybody into custody; while the usher, who never had before been witness to such an exhibition, was unable to call for silence in a higher tone than a whisper.

"To what do you depose?" said the Attorney General.

"I robbed the prosecutor, Tom Brereton, of his pocket-book on Ealing Common on the night in question."

"Was the prisoner at the bar present?"

"No."

"Was he in any shape, way, or manner, cognisant of the robbery?"

"Certainly not; he and I were utter strangers."

"Now, my lord," said the Attorney General, "you know that it is an established custom of all courts to protect witnesses in giving evidence. I claim, therefore, safe conduct for this witness."

"Why, Mr. Attorney, you don't mean," said the recorder, "to ask the court to let this most notorious and much sought for criminal go?"

"I think he is entitled to a safe conduct."

"Monstrous! I will, if there be any such sort of custom, break in upon it; officers, take that man into custody, and hold him safely. Now-a-days, courts of justice must not be sanctuaries for great offenders. I remand the prisoner at the bar."

May started forward and clasped her hands round Claude as she said—

“You will not fall—you will not be sacrificed?”

“Farewell,” said Claude. “Bless you, May!”

“I did not wish this,” said Brereton.

“No, Markham,” cried May, “I know you did not. I know well you did not.”

“Save Claude Duval,” cried a voice in the court. “There’s enough of us to do that easily enough. Save him for his gallant conduct in coming forward to sacrifice himself, rather than that an innocent man should suffer.”

The voice was Sixteen-string Jack’s. A partial rush was made by some few persons, acting upon the sudden and thrilling impulse given to them by these words, but half a dozen officers immediately precipitated themselves upon Claude Duval, who himself cried in a loud voice—“Forbear! The attempt is madness! Forbear, my friends—forbear! it is a vain effort, my friends, quite vain!”

Claude knew well that the mere crowd in the court was not to be depended upon, and he likewise knew that his life must be lost in the affair, for it would be the duty of the officers to resist to death. The judge now left the court, which was ordered to be closed, and as the best way of doing that, the officials began to extinguish the lights rapidly. This soon had the desired effect, and in the course of the next quarter of an hour the court of the Old Bailey was left to silence and to darkness. Claude Duval was heavily ironed and led through a number of intricate and winding passages to a cell, which was presumed to be of such strength as to defy all the attempts that even he, with all his courage and with all his ingenuity, could make to escape from its confines. The cell which was assigned him was indeed a gloomy one, and seldom used, except to place the very worst of malefactors in when they were too refractory for any ordinary control. But from that very circumstance Claude Duval gathered hope.

“This cell,” he said to himself, “is out of the usual track of the turnkeys. It is not now so well watched as any other, so that I am left, at all events, to myself to carry on what operations I may please.”

“Now,” said the governor, as the door was closed and barred, and doubly locked and bolted upon Claude Duval, “I think we have this bird in about as secure a cage as old Newgate can very well accommodate any one with.”

Truly there is nothing so dangerous as excessive vanity. The governor did not yet know the man he had to deal with.

“Wait a bit,” said Claude, as he flung himself upon the miserable stump bedstead that was in the cell, “wait a bit—I may still give you something more to talk about yet, Mr. Governor.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

How deserted poor May Duval felt! Perhaps of all persons intimately connected with the various personages and events of our story, she felt most acutely the painful sense of loneliness, which is worse than any other species of grief. If Markham had been quite at liberty at once, no doubt he would have taken upon himself the task of consoling her in her sufferings. But alas! both the persons in whose happiness and existence all the best feelings of affection were built up, were now within those dreary walls of the much-dreaded Newgate. Cicely, from the place of security in which Claude had placed her, knew literally nothing of what was going on, she only thought that Claude was necessarily absent on business connected with her brother’s position; but although he had told her over and over again that he would save Markham Brereton, he had not told her it was to be at the price of his own life. She had not questioned him closely as to the means he had of carrying out such a promise; but with that blind confidence which all per-

sous ought to have in the resources of those whom they love, she had stifled her fears into a belief that what Claude really chose to do he would find some safe and easy enough mode of speedily accomplishing. His last words had been to her,—“Wait, Cicely, and inquire nothing, believe nothing until you hear from me.”

“And will that be soon, Claude?” she asked him.

“As soon,” he replied, “as it is possible, consistent with the safety of both Markham and myself to do so.”

This had satisfied Cicely, and she waited anxiously, it is true, but without the horror of knowing or even suspecting Claude's real situation. That it was his hope to alter that situation before the truth of its reality came upon the mind of Cicely, we can well enough imagine. It will not be from the lack of energy, or courage, or that species of perseverance which overcomes apparently insurmountable difficulties, if he succeed not.

It must not be supposed that Claude had resigned himself to a dungeon, without making some previous arrangements, the carrying out of which might be beneficial to him in his imprisonment. For example, he had arranged with Sixteen-string Jack a mode of conversation from without, which it was next to impossible the authorities of Newgate could discern, or even dream of. It was this. Certain articles were always permitted, after the most careful examination, to pass to prisoners, but no letters were permitted to be sent, which did not first undergo a careful inspection from the authorities, and Sixteen-string Jack had no wish to send, and Claude Duval had no wish to receive such love-courting epistles as are thought admissible to Newgate; they adopted the plan we speak of. It was agreed that when any inconsiderable or allowable article was sent into the prison for Claude's use, it should be carelessly wrapped in an old torn piece of newspaper. Upon such piece of newspaper there would sure to be letters enough under which Jack could put a small dot to compose the number of words which he wished to make up to Claude's understanding. By this means they hoped to keep up something like a correspondence, for Claude could return the paper with soiled linen or anything that he was allowed to send out of the prison in the same way. He was allowed pens and ink, with the hope that some fit of remorse would seize him in consequence of his lonely and mind-depressing situation, during which he would write some confession, implicating himself and others. They did not know much of Claude Duval, though, when they ventured to calculate upon such a state of things, and upon such ordinary and commonplace results in his case. Still it was necessary he should appear to make some use of the writing materials, and he did, by writing some of the most extraordinary twaddle that could be imagined, and which quite confused the governor, the chaplain, and the sheriffs, to each of whom it was duly submitted. As for Markham Brereton, although assured now of his own safety and enfranchisement from prison, yet he was, if possible, in a more distressed state of mind than before, and yet he could not tell himself why he should be so. Claude Duval had done the robbery, and Claude Duval certainly ought, if anybody suffered from it, to be the person. Moreover, to have allowed him, Markham Brereton, to be executed innocently, would surely have been the height of baseness. But yet, although Claude would have been beneath contempt to have not come forward, his doing so was a chivalric act, and it was a romantic appreciation of its chivalry which made Markham unhappy. He became therefore extremely anxious for Claude's safety.

“How shall I save him?” he kept repeating to himself. “What means can I possibly adopt to save him?”

The oftener he asked himself the question the more impossible did it seem for him to find a satisfactory reply, and he could not help coming to the painful conclusion, that from the moment Claude Duval had announced his name in the court of the Old Bailey, his fate was fixed. Of course he, Markham Brereton, was in complete ignorance of Claude's external resources, nor could he be supposed to have a very clear notion of the personal powers

of the highwayman. It seemed so hopeless a thing to escape from Newgate, that he, Markham, had not made the smallest attempt so to do; but he little knew that it was one of Claude Duval's most familiar thoughts, that he should some day be caught, and then imprisoned, and that he would then endeavor to add his name to the short muster-roll of those who, with the most extraordinary perseverance and courage, had managed to make their way from those gloomy and spirit-depressing walls. There was also a third person well known to the reader in Newgate, with whom we certainly cannot have any amount of sympathy. That person is the despicable Tom Breton, who had been committed on the charge of perjury and put into a room where there were a number of untried prisoners; but it was not the policy of the governor, who had been conniving at Tom's baseness, and who now dreaded a betrayal, to keep him where he could find any company. Accordingly, calling one of the turnkeys, the governor said to him quite confidentially—"Davis, I want Thomas Breton in solitary confinement. You understand me. He must be alone."

"All right, sir. He'll be refractory soon," said the turnkey, with a grin, for if the authorities chose that any prisoner should be refractory, why refractory to all intents and purposes he was very soon declared.

"That will do," said the governor.

In a little time after this, the turnkey entered the ward where Tom was, and going up to him, he said—"What, you will, will you?"

"Will what?" said Tom. "Oh, dear me, I am doing nothing."

"Gammon."

"What, sir?"

"Oh, don't try to gammon me. I saw you making ready to give me a hit in the eye, so away you comes to a refractory cell."

With this Tom was violently seized and dragged off, in spite of his loud remonstrances of how peaceably inclined he really was. That some dreadful fate awaited him, Tom Breton fully believed, and he made the prison echo again with his shouts, but in such a place remonstrance, whether loud or low, produced but little effect, and Tom soon found himself the inmate of one of a range of cells, tolerably well out of ear-shot of the rest of the prisoners of Newgate.

"There," said the jailer, "you may roar as loud as you like. There's nobody but the rats and beetles to hear you."

"Murder! murder!"

"Oh, it's all very fine. Who the deuce do you suppose would take the trouble to murder you?"

"Help!—help!"

"Oh, very good. You won't be quiet. Bang goes the door, then."

The door of the cell was closed and bolted upon him, and Tom was left to two things he never liked, namely, darkness and solitude. What his reflections were likely to be, we may in some measure judge from what we know of his cowardly character. He now cried in a perfect paroxysm of fear for almost an hour, and then he fancied he heard a footstep approaching down the narrow passage from which his cell, in connection with many others, opened. He listened attentively, and when he at length heard the footstep pause at the door of the miserable place in which he was, and the bolts being removed, a hope that, after all, he should be delivered from confinement, sprang up in his breast, and he cried out—"I'm here—I'm here!"

The door swung open, and the governor made his appearance.

"Oh, it's you," said Tom.

"Yes," said the governor, as he carefully closed the door behind him, and set down the light he carried upon the floor—"yes, it is I."

There was something about the governor's manner that gave Tom some qualms of fear, and then there was something likewise about the look of his face that was far from pleasant or encouraging to him, Tom Breton.



Winter - Tringo Jack talking his "muscular"
adventures to the "Turkey"

The position of the light, too, so low down as it was, cast some very strange shadows upon the governor's countenance, and made him look rather diabolical, as with folded arms he stood now glaring at Tom Brereton as though he expected him first to begin a dialogue, which could not be expected to be very delightful to either of them. This Tom was in no hurry to do, but yet he was one of those weak-resolved personages who cannot endure silence for long, and now that he saw, or thought he saw, that the governor was determined not to say anything first, he spoke—"So you have come to see me, have you?" he said.

"Yes, idiot," said the governor.

"Well, that's polite, at any rate, old fellow."

A scowl stopped the familiar jocosity with which Tom would have been glad to carry on the conversation.

"I don't come here for folly and ribaldry," said the governor.

"Oh!"

"No; it is business with me. I am in danger."

"Well, so am I," said Tom.

"What is your danger to me, you worse than idiot; you rogue in heart, and absolute fool in capacity. You have implicated me in your transactions, and, of course, to save yourself, you will, I suppose, turn evidence against me and blow the whole affair. You need not deny it, as, of course, you are about to do, for I know you too well."

"Oh, dear," said Tom. "You very much deceive yourself. But what's to hinder your letting me go, and then, you know, there's no danger."

Tom thought now that he had got hold of quite a bright idea, and that if he threatened the governor with disclosures that would thoroughly implicate him, if he did not connive at his escape, he (the governor) would feel himself compelled, from considerations of personal safety, to let him free.

"You know," he said, "we both rowed in the same boat, and it is not at all natural that I should like to suffer alone when you were to have had part of the profit if we had succeeded, you know; but if you let me go, of course then I could only come to harm by saying anything about you."

"That is your calculation, is it? Well, perhaps, under some circumstances, it might have succeeded; but it is too late."

Tom gave a groan.

"I say," continued the governor, "it is too late."

"Oh dear—oh dear!"

"Ay, you have made a fool of yourself indeed, and you may well say—'Oh dear.'"

"Really, you are very severe," said Tom.

"Not more so than the occasion warrants, I am quite sure, Thomas Brereton."

"You think not?"

"Bah! this is the very worst of trifling. What do you mean to do? that is the question. If you intend to turn evidence against me, and implicate me, I must look to my own safety by some means, and whether or not those means will be pleasant to you, depends upon the turn my thoughts may chance to take in the matter."

Tom had sense enough to feel, whatever he meant to do, it would be at the present juncture highly dangerous to induce any belief in the mind of the governor that he meditated any danger towards him, so he said—

"Well, as you put it in that fair light, I will tell you really what I mean to do, now. I shall hold out like a brick."

"Only keep to that resolution, and you will find me your friend, Tom Brereton; break it, and your danger will be great. So, good bye."

"Stop, stop, I say. Are you going?"

"I must."

"But—but, am I to stay here in this dark place?"

"Only for a little time. You may depend, that as you keep faith with me,

I will keep faith with you, Tom Brereton; the result will soon be sufficiently apparent to you."

The governor then rather abruptly left the cell, leaving Tom in a state of anxious doubt as to whether he had been clever or not.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JACK was not unmindful of what had been agreed upon between him and Claude Duval previous to the latter being placed in the gloomy walls of Newgate. And, in addition to the efforts without, which Sixteen-string Jack was to make to supply Claude with the means of making some effort for freedom, he, Jack, had some desperate scheme of his own which he kept secret from Claude. But Sixteen-string Jack reasoned in a gallant way altogether. "I hold my life cheap," he said, "if I employ it in Claude's service, and nothing shall be too desperate for me to attempt for his release." Acting upon this feeling, he commenced some proceedings, in the course of which we will follow him.

One thing he wanted, which he knew was to be had in London for money, and that was an accurate plan of Newgate. That a plan was to be had somewhere, Sixteen-string Jack knew well, but where he did not exactly know; and he had another difficulty, which lay in the fact of being rather short of funds, for although he had enough money for any of the ordinary contingencies of living, he certainly had not enough for such purposes as he now required it. Under these circumstances, Jack asked himself where was the most likely place to find the cash that would be sufficient for his purpose. Now, from many long conversations which Jack had had with Claude Duval, he had imbibed many of the latter's notions, one of which was, that the crime of robbing a robber was certainly by no means so great in a social point of view, as robbing an honest and industrious man. Among robbers, and the worst of robbers, too, Claude very properly classed most public functionaries, secretaries of charitable societies, persons connected with the administration of public monies, and canting, hypocritical scrapers together of subscriptions of all sorts, kinds, and degrees. Ministers of state, parsons and lawyers, he likewise comprehended in his list of persons who, from their frequent dishonesty and cupidity, were all fair game for the highwayman or the house-breaker. "It is among such, Jack," he used to say, "that you may commit what amount of depredation you can, and although the law will be exercised more strongly against you than if you robbed a poor man of his last shilling, yet you will find, in an absolute ease of conscience, much compensation for the additional risk that you run." These lessons had not been thrown away upon Sixteen-string Jack. He was sitting in the little dark parlor of rather an obscure public-house, thinking over his position, when his eye happened to rest upon a paragraph in a newspaper that was lying upon the table before him. It ran thus—

"Yesterday, His Grace the Lord Bishop of London, presented to the Rev. and Hon. George Augustus Fitzflunkie, the living of Upton Lees, estimated as worth 1,400*l.* per annum. The Rev. George Augustus Fitzflunkie is already Rector of Andoy, Incumbent of St. Margaret's, Rector of Heglton, Vicar of Bolton-cum-Lees, &c. &c. We understand that the Rev. gentleman has just returned from Naples, where he spends the greater part of his time, no doubt in prayer for the poor curates who perform his duties at home for an average of 60*l.* per annum each, whilst his revenue amounts in the whole to the sum of 8,448*l.* per annum."

"What a rogue!" said Sixteen-string Jack.

And Sixteen-string Jack, the highwayman, the house-breaker, the liver upon other men's substance, the thief who called "Stand!" upon the king's high-

way, blessed his stars that he was not such a rogue as the bloated church pluralist; and he was right! He was not such a rogue.

"I will rob that man," said Jack, "if it can be done, as sure as I am alive; he is one of the greatest scoundrels, even among parsons, that I have heard of for many a long day."

There were some serious difficulties in the way. First of all, Jack had to find out where the reverend gentleman was, and he had to concoct a plot by which, at the least amount of personal risk, he should be made to surrender some of his ill-gotten money, but difficulty only sharpens invention, and Jack first of all set out to find where the reverend sinner resided in London. This was not a difficult task by any means, and indeed Jack saw the reverend gentleman actually come out of his hotel, and on foot, too, condescending to walk the streets like any common man, which certainly ought to have been thought something, and considering that he was an humble and meek follower of the disciples, who were such luxurious personages. Jack took such accurate notice of him that he felt certain now, that let him see him when and where he might, he could not be mistaken in him. Jack followed him with some curiosity, and he was not long in discovering why the reverend gentleman chose to walk instead of to make use of one of his luxurious carriages. He followed every young lady he chanced to see who had a pretty face and a neat ankle; of course, his object was to beg of them to say their prayers regularly, and attend scrupulously to their religious duties. Such a very reverend personage, who was thought worthy of so many livings, could have no other object in view. This was enough for Sixteen-string Jack, and he left the reverend gentleman to his onerous duties, while he made his arrangements accordingly. It was in the dusk of the evening that Sixteen-string Jack knocked at the door of a private house in the vicinity of Bloomsbury Square. It was a very peculiar sort of knock, and in a few minutes it was opened by a black man, who said, "One—two—three."

"No," said Sixteen-string Jack, "twenty-four."

"From the country?" said the black.

"Yes, Mungo."

"Me no Mungo. Me Lillywhite."

"That will do. Is your master within?"

"Yes, him be."

Jack followed the black into the house, which was rather elegantly furnished, and was shown into an apartment on the ground floor, which had the appearance of an office for the regular transaction of business. After waiting for some time, a pale, small, thin man made his appearance and, with an easy address, said, "Have you a name to state?"

"Yes, Claude Duval told me to say I knew him as forty, and that if you thought him at all worth anything, I ought to be worth something."

"Very good."

"You are satisfied?"

"Quite. Sit down. I suppose you come with a proposition?"

"I do."

"Very well. Be so good as to state it as precisely as you can."

Sixteen-string Jack made a speech of some ten minutes' duration to the little pale, thin man, but as the object of it will best be seen during the course of what occurred in the next few hours, we need not detail it. Suffice it to say that at its conclusion the man of the house rose, and took several turns to and fro in the room as if considering, and then he said—"It might be tried. It is novel."

"I thought so."

"Oh, yes. A similar kind of thing has been done, but not in that way. Yes, half of 500*l.*, you say, will be enough for your purpose?"

"It will, and I make no secret to you of what that purpose is."

"What?"

"It is to attempt the rescue of Claude Duval."

"Indeed?"

"We are old companions and dear friends."

"Well, you can easily suppose that I wish you all the success in the world. Who you are I don't know. I see you are disguised, or, perhaps, I might know you, but I am quite satisfied that I am in safe hands."

"You are, indeed, and perhaps soon, when we are a little better acquainted, I shall let you into the secret of who I am. There is one question I want answered and which, probably, you are the very man to answer."

"What is it?"

"Where can I get a plan of Newgate?"

"Here?"

"Indeed! And the terms?"

"If this affair that I have consented to enter upon should succeed, you shall not want either a plan of Newgate, or as much efficient assistance for Claude Duval as will go far towards insuring success in attempting his rescue."

"I am glad of that."

Shortly after this, Sixteen-string Jack, who, it will be noted, had evidently recovered much of the daring, courageous character which, for a time, had been under a cloud of depression, left the mysterious house. He managed upon that evening to send in the following words to Claude Duval, marked upon a piece of newspaper—"Be tranquil. All is going on well. Do nothing rashly, Claude; and, in fact, do nothing at all until you hear again from me."

Claude returned the paper with some soiled linen, and had marked as follows in answer to Jack—"Do you do nothing rashly, Jack; I mean to give myself twenty-four hours' thought before attempting anything. I think May ought to be taken to Cicely, who you know is my wife. They will no doubt be good friends, and console each other. Cicely has money."

Claude had put Jack fully in possession of where Cicely was, and of all the circumstances connected with his marriage to her, and as this companionship of May Duval and Cicely was a thing that he, Jack, had before advised, he arranged, with considerable alacrity, the measures necessary to bring it about as soon as possible.

It would have been quite impossible for Claude Duval to have thought of anything which could have given more exquisite and general satisfaction to both his sister and Cicely, than this proposition of companionship between them. Their old intimacy, and a certain congeniality of tastes, feelings, and dispositions, had always made them the best of friends. No wonder, therefore, that the intercourse which had for a time been denied them, was renewed with the greatest gratification by both. The only thing that rather puzzled Jack in the affair was, that Claude Duval, in his few words from the prison, had not been explicit as to whether Cicely was to be made acquainted with his situation or not. Upon this head, however, he thought he would take the advice of May, or leave it as a matter altogether in her discretion. For his own part, he was decidedly of opinion that Cicely had better know all that had happened, inasmuch as thus knowing it from those who could and who would tell her the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, she would be spared the shock of hearing, by some accident, a distorted and partial statement of those circumstances in which she was so very deeply interested. Sixteen-string Jack knew where to find May. He thought the best way was to explain to her his mode of communicating with Claude Duval, and actually to show her the few words which he had written.

"They will," he said to himself, "silence all scruples about her accompanying me, in case she should happen to have any, which may or may not be the fact."

He found May in a state of deep grief, and it was a great satisfaction to him to be able to say to her what he did.

"You have a remembrance of Cicely Brereton?" he said.

"Oh! yes, yes."

"Then Claude wishes you to be with her, to console her for his absence."

May was silent for a moment or two, and then she said—"You are Claude's friend, and I know that from you he hides nothing. Tell me, now, in all truth and honesty, is Cicely Claude's wife?"

"In all truth and honesty, she is."

"I am satisfied and delighted, and yet——"

"Yet what, Miss May? You hesitate."

"I do, and I hardly know why I do so. Give me but a few brief moments to collect my thoughts, and I shall be able to accompany you freely."

Alas! poor May, her mind was going back to old scenes—to the brief period of happiness that the family of the Breretons had enjoyed, while they were unmolested at the farm-house, with all its pleasant appurtenance of gardens and orchards, at Guilford. It was there that Markham Brereton had first told her that he loved her.

Sixteen-string Jack saw that she was deeply moved, and he thought to be sure it was Claude's fate she was thinking of. He hastened to put her in better spirits by saying—"All are not lost, Miss May, who are in danger. People have broken out of Newgate before to-day, and why may not Claude do so?"

"Alas! is an escape from Newgate the only hope?" said May.

"Not the only hope; but if it were, should you think it impossible?"

"I should, indeed. You must recollect, Jack, that Newgate is different now to what it was then, when the daring characters of the last century laughed at its bolts and bars."

Jack winced a little at this remark. Its truth struck him rather more forcibly than pleasantly, and he was rather induced to be silent and reflective for the rest of the time, as they proceeded to where Cicely was staying. We need not detail the interview between Cicely and May. Suffice it to say that it was on both sides all that could be wished. Cicely had always had a great partiality for May Duval, and from the first few words that she now spoke to her, May found that that partiality had suffered no diminution. The worst part of the meeting, however, had to come, and well might May shrink from reciting to Cicely all that she had to tell her. But yet it had to be done, so May set about it as courageously as could be, and fairly and distinctly told Cicely all that happened from first to last of the trial of Markham Brereton and its results. Cicely listened with the most breathless attention; and when she had concluded, it was evident that Cicely was making a very great effort to overcome her emotion, and to exhibit a calmness and fortitude she was far from feeling in reality. The effort was, however, too much for her, and clasping her hands over her face, she burst into tears.

"Ah," said May, while Cicely was sobbing hysterically, "I almost regret that I have told you at all."

"No, no; do not regret it. Do not regret it," sobbed Cicely, "and do not fancy that these tears are those of regret that Claude has placed himself in his present position. No—no. He was right to do as he has done, and if he had done otherwise he would not have been the Claude I took him to be."

"Ah, how happy we all ought to be, Cicely, with such thoughts and feelings! And yet shall we ever know even serenity again!"

"Heaven only knows, May. But what can be done? Are we condemned to be merely spectators of what is going on? Can we do nothing for Claude?"

"Alas! nothing—nothing. We must perforce remain as we are, and wait the issue of events which to us are of terrific importance. There is a perfect understanding between Claude and his friend, Sixteen-string Jack, and that they mean to try something I have no doubt. Let us hope for the best."

Sixteen-string Jack had promised to return in an hour when he left May with Cicely, and as that period of time had expired, he made his appearance,

according to his promise. The moment he showed himself, Cicely ran eagerly towards him, and taking him by the hand, she said—

“Tell me—tell me, I implore you, by all your dearest hopes—tell me, what can be done for Claude?”

“I really cannot tell you what will be done, but I can tell you that every thing will be attempted. Be of good cheer. Claude is hopeful, and so am I. There is no violent hurry about it just now. Nothing is to be gained by precipitation; and, besides, the first flush of caution as regards Claude in Newgate, upon the part of the authorities of the prison, will blow over when they see that he is quiet, and apparently resigned to the circumstances that surround him.”

“And—and you have hope?”

“Indeed, I have abundance of hope. Do not ask me to detail my plan to you, for it will very likely assume many different shapes yet, before it can be matured and carried out, but all the information that from time to time I can bring here I will bring, of that be assured.”

This was rather meagre as regarded actual information, but both Cicely and May felt that it would be unjust, as well as ungenerous, to force further explanations at that juncture from Jack; so they let him go, declaring themselves satisfied with his promise to come from time to time, and let them know what was doing. Having thus far carried out Claude's wishes, Jack set about procuring the money, without which he felt how useless it would be to attempt anything for Claude. The plan of operations that he had concocted with the man who had promised him a plan of Newgate was fully successful. The result was to place in the hands of Sixteen-string Jack a considerable sum of money, and an accurate plan of Newgate and the surrounding houses. He had already ascertained from Claude by the mode of communication that they had agreed upon between them, what part of the prison he was confined in, so that now, with the plan before him, Jack had no difficulty in marking the very spot where Claude was languishing in the fortress-like building. This was something, but it was not everything. The first step had yet to be taken, Jack had continually to labor under a difficulty which would not have beset any one but himself. That was the dread of being himself recognised by any of the officials of the prison, for he was perfectly well known to them all, having been for a long time in the jail before his trial and execution. To be sure, feeling confident, as all the officers and turnkeys in Newgate of course did, that he, Sixteen-string Jack, had been duly executed at Tyburn, they, even if they had seen him, could scarcely have been able to believe their own eyes; but what he dreaded was the consequent inquiry that would in all likelihood thus ensue. Thus, then, all that he did had to be done under this serious disadvantage, that he was compelled to keep himself continually disguised. He wrote to Claude, by means of an old piece of newspaper, as follows—

“I have a plan of Newgate, and know your cell. If gold can purchase a turnkey it shall be done, as that would be an assistance, but, whether or not, hope for the best, and do nothing yourself until I send you word that I can do nothing for you. May is with Cicely.”

We shall now leave Claude, while we turn our attention to Sixteen-string Jack's proceedings, which were most singular and complicated. He felt that by no ordinary, or every-day means, could there be any reasonable hope of snatching Claude from his prison, and certainly, if by bold daring, and the most exquisitely put together plan of proceeding, success could be achieved, Sixteen-string Jack fully deserved it, for such a plan was never before attempted of invading, in the manner Jack intended to do, the inmost recesses of Newgate.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was on a drizzly, damp, and most uncomfortable evening that Sixteen-string Jack, in the dress of a drover from Smithfield Market, entered a public-house nearly opposite to the debtor's door of the Old Bailey, where he knew the turnkeys and under-officers of the prison were in the habit of coming to solace themselves with various creature comforts after their spells of duty. He called for some ale, which he stood sipping at the bar, while he regarded with interest the countenances of the persons who came in from Newgate. It was then the fashion for all officials connected with the jail to wear red waistcoats, so that there was no difficulty in recognising them, for if they buttoned up ever so closely, they always managed to allow some portion of the red waistcoat to show itself. One of those men Jack knew at once. He was the one who had always brought him his rations while he, Jack, was waiting for execution in one of the condemned cells. Before this turnkey could order anything, Jack said to him in rather a mysterious tone, at the same time pushing his ale towards him—

"Have you been in Newgate long enough to recollect Sixteen-string Jack?"

"Ah, to be sure I have. What then?"

"Well, then, I don't mind telling you what I have not mentioned to anybody else, and that is, that last night, while I was dozing against one of the pens in the market, for I had made up my mind to keep watch, as me and my partner had lost a four-year-old, and you know that thieves always come twice, and so you see I thought it would be only prudent, you understand, to——"

"God bless me, what a rigmarole!" said the officer.

"Well, I'm coming to the point—you don't drink. Well, as I was saying, I was half asleep, leaning against the pens, when the hospital clock struck twelve, and then St. Sepulchre's struck twelve, and I said to myself, one or the other of them must be slow, and——"

"Confound you," said the officer, as he finished Jack's ale, "if you are not the most roundabout story-teller I ever came near in all my life. Come, be quick."

"I will. Well, from Barbican way there came a man on horseback, but who made no noise on the rough stones. On he came right up to me, and stopping close to the pen, he said, 'My friend, I had not an opportunity of thanking you for handing me up my handkerchief before, but I do now.' 'Your handkerchief?' said I. 'Yes,' he added, 'on Holborn Hill, September 16. Look at me well.' I did so, and then, as the moon struggled out, I saw that it was Sixteen-string Jack, to whom, as he went to be hung, I had handed his handkerchief, which he let drop out of the cart on Holborn Hill."

"Oh, stuff—stuff!" said the turnkey.

"Well, it may be, but I only tell you of it just as it happened to me. You may suppose I stared a little, and shook a little, but after a few moments he said, 'You need not be afraid, Joseph Brown—you need not be afraid, Joseph Brown. Perhaps I can tell you something that may be for your good. Listen, Joseph Brown, I have not much time to spare.'

"I had recovered myself a little by this time, and the idea took possession of me that I was being hoaxed, and made game of for somebody's sport, so I up with my thick stick, and gave him a pelt over the head with it, saying as I did so—'take that as a stopper to your joking to-night.'"

"The stick went clean through him and the horse, without meeting with any opposition, and then I dropped it, and I felt my hair begin to stand on end. 'Joseph,' said the spectre, in rather a mournful tone of voice, 'I'm sorry you did that. It's the worst blow possible to strike at nothing. But my mission is not over. Find out Mr. Swade, at Newgate, and give this to him

It was his handkerchief, not mine, and it was accidentally buried with me. Tell him, Joseph Brown, that I will call upon him some night at Newgate.'"

"What!" cried the turnkey, "what! did he say Mr. Swade?"

"Yes, he did."

"Why—why, that's my name."

"Yours?"

"Yes, to be sure, and you know it. Come, come, this is some joke, but it won't do. Everybody, of course, saw me lend my handkerchief to Sixteen-string Jack, in the lobby of Newgate. No, no, this won't do, and I happen to know it was buried with him. At least, when his friends took away the body, it went with it."

"That's just what he said. After saying it, away he went; and when I recovered myself a little, I found on one of the posts the handkerchief."

As he spoke, Jack produced from his pocket a handkerchief, which he handed to Mr. Swade. Now, the turnkey was rather a jovial, hearty-looking sort of man, under ordinary circumstances, but when he saw the handkerchief, he turned as pale as death, and staggered back till he came to a seat, upon which he sat down with a plump that was enough to knock all the breath out of his lungs at once. Sixteen-string Jack took the opportunity of slipping out of the house. A crowd gathered round Mr. Swade, whom everybody thought was taken suddenly ill, and there he sat, with the handkerchief in his hand, which he knew perfectly well, and gasping in a curious manner, in a vain attempt to say something about it to those around him.

While this bustle was going on at the public-house, Sixteen-string Jack hurried off to a lodging he had taken, and got rid of the drover's clothes. He attired himself quite different, and sallied out into the street, saying as he did so—"There can be no doubt now, that all the turnkeys in Newgate will fully expect a visit from my apparition, so that if I do show myself I shall produce a tolerable sensation." The accurate plan of Newgate that he had, sufficed to show him that there was a house in Newgate-street, the back attic of which was not more than twenty-five feet from the top of the wall of the prison, which wall was covered with spikes abutting in all directions. As fortune would have it, this attic was to let as a sleeping room. The house was kept by an old woman who sold haberdashery in a small way, and as Jack was decently dressed, and threw into his manner much courtesy to the old woman, his application regarding taking the attic was favorably received, and in consideration of alleging he was a stranger in London, a reference was dispensed with upon his paying a month's rent in advance. Sixteen-string Jack fairly took possession of the attic, and that evening he managed, by sending a shirt to Claude, to communicate with him to the following effect—"I shall make an effort to reach you, as soon as a man named Swade is on the lock of the outer gate. Let me know, if you can, the name of the turnkey who visits you at night, for I know it is the custom for one to visit prisoners who are in separate confinement. Hope for the best, Claude."

To this Claude Duval managed on the succeeding morning to send the following reply to Jack—"The turnkey's name is Wright. Be cautious, Jack, and do not peril yourself for me. Do nothing rashly, for it would surely fail."

"Wright," muttered Jack, "I must see this Mr. Wright, and ascertain what sort of metal he is composed of. He may be flexible enough, or he might not. At all events, it can but be tried; but the trial must be done with caution."

Of course, the great difficulty in making an attempt upon the integrity of this man, Wright, consisted in doing it so that its failure, if it should fail, entailed no bad effects upon him, Sixteen-string Jack. After much thought, Jack hit upon a mode of accomplishing this. He found that Wright came over to the public-house regularly to have his drop, and that there generally dropped in about the same time a man dressed in a long drab coat, half-dressing gown, and half-dressing coat, and who had a glass of beer, which he consumed with a small biscuit he took from his pocket always. Upon inquiry, Jack found that

this man was a clerk to a well-known usurer's attorney in the neighborhood, and, indeed, it was considered that he was a sort of partner in the grasping business. After taking the most careful notes of this man's dress, Jack went to one of those places in London, where accurate costumes of any required description can be had in a few hours, and supplied himself with a drab coat, and so exactly like that of the usurer's clerk, that he might very well be taken for him by any one not intimate with his physiognomy. The next thing to do was to find Mr. Wright somewhere away from the public-house, and this, after some waiting, Jack accomplished at night, for he saw him come out of Newgate, and walk towards Smithfield. Jack pursued and called to him.

"Hilloa!" said the officer, pausing; "what do you want? Oh, your name is Falk, is it not? I think I have seen you often at the Rose Inn."

"Yes," said Jack, "yes. Mr. Wright, have you any objection to earn a 100*l.* note?"

"Humph! How do you mean?"

"In plain language, will you connive at the escape of a prisoner from Newgate for 100*l.* provided it can be so managed that you are in no way implicated?"

"An awkward and dangerous proposal from you to me, Mr. Falk. I must really have a little time to consider.

"Very well. Will you let me know when you see me taking my glass at the Rose to-morrow morning?"

"Certainly, I will."

On the following morning, Jack took care to be at the bar of the Rose Inn, but in quite a different costume; and presently came in the real Mr. Falk, with his drab coat, and asked for his half pint of beer, as usual.

In an instant, Wright sprung upon him; and two officers, who were there in disguise, likewise pounced upon him, and poor old Falk found himself handcuffed in the twinkling of an eye.

"Murder! murder!" he cried. "What's this for?"

"Oh, you know," said Wright.

"How can I know? Good God! what have I done? It's some mistake. What have I done?"

"One scarcely expects you to admit it," said Wright, "but you will find that trying to bribe a sworn officer is an offence. Bring him along."

"Ah," said Sixteen-string Jack to himself, "it was as well for me to be cautious. Wright will not be bribed; but I have lost nothing by trying, so now I know what I have to depend upon, and fear no ill-consequences from the experiment."

Two persons were talking at the corner of Newgate-street as he passed. One was a perfect stranger to him, but the other was Svade, the officer, and Jack heard him say, in answer to something from his acquaintance—"I would, with pleasure, but I am on the outer wall to-night."

"To-night, then," said Jack, as he crept up the attic stairs to the room he had hired, "to-night, then, the attempt must be made to free you, Claude. It is desperate; but yet a desperate adventure will sometimes succeed where a carefully got up one would fail."

Sixteen-string Jack had made all his arrangements, so that there was no necessity for him to leave the attic again that day, except to send something into the prison to Claude, by means of which he might let him know that he would that night make an attempt to rescue him. He marked letters sufficient on a piece of newspaper, to convey to Claude the following communication:—"Expect to see me to-night, Claude. Keep yourself awake and well alive. All may, and shall be well, if I can make it so." So much depended upon circumstances as they might occur, that Jack could not say anything more explicit to Claude—and so, after sending that much to him, he waited until the shades of evening began to gather around the city, and the lights were gleaming in the streets. From the lights in the shops, as well as from those in the street, there came a strong reflection, so that Jack was able, from

his eyes having become gradually accustomed to the creeping on of that ruddy sort of twilight, to see tolerably plain everything in the attic. The clock of St. Sepulchre's church struck ten as he began his preparations for entering Newgate—that dreadful abode which he last left in a cart to go to execution. He carefully unlocked a large chest that he had in the room, the key of which he had cautiously hidden. In this chest were some very long, stout iron hooks, or grapnels, and at the end of each of them, and here and there in the rope, was tied a great knot by means of smaller pieces, so that there was a good hold at places for either feet or hands. Slowly, and with the utmost caution, Sixteen-string Jack opened his attic window and looked out into the night air. The legion of spikes and *chevaux de frise* that ran on the top of the prison wall could be clearly seen against the bright sky, and there it was that Jack now directed all his attention.

He cast one of his ropes so that the hook fell among the *chevaux de frise* on the top of the wall, and then, pulling it tight, he ascertained that he had a good firm hold. He then secured unto the window-sill a very strong brass hook, which seemed such as chandeliers are suspended from ceilings by, and fastened the other end of his rope to it firmly and tightly.

There was much more to do, though, besides fixing the rope, before Sixteen-string Jack could venture into Newgate; but he set about his well-arranged preparations with great speed and exactitude. First of all he dressed himself from top to toe, exactly as he had dressed when he left Newgate to go to execution. It was not without some strange thoughts that Sixteen-string Jack put on that clothing, which brought back to his mind, more vividly than usual, such a host of painful thoughts and feelings. But this was only a temporary feeling, and not one that he would for a moment allow to interfere with the proceedings to which he had so heart and soul pledged himself. He gave the finishing touch to his costume by putting on a large cravat, and then he said—"Now, Claude, I will rescue you, or we shall, I think, both have our homes in old Newgate to-night."

Notwithstanding Jack had succeeded tolerably well so far, and that he had found a good hold upon the iron-work on the top of the prison wall for the rope, which made a frail bridge from thence to his attic, it was no easy task, at that giddy height from the ground, and with the faint, uncertain light about him, to achieve the first step in the adventure. He tried the rope repeatedly, to thoroughly satisfy himself that it was quite secure; and then, as he stood upon the window-sill of the attic, he listened for a few moments till he heard St. Sepulchre's church clock strike eleven.

"It is time," said Jack, "it is time."

He carefully, before starting, fastened his apparel about him in such a way there was no loose portion of it dangling about, and this he did with the greatest ease, as he took with him a quantity of rope, which he coiled round and round him, as being the most ready and easy way of conveying it. A pair of good double-barrelled pistols, carefully loaded, he placed in a breast pocket, and a knife, and a file, and a pair of strong nippers he likewise had with him. Thus he considered himself provided against all ordinary contingencies; and with a firm determination not to be deterred from the prosecution of his object let what would occur, he swung himself off the attic window-ledge on to the rope. The distance from his window had really looked nothing, but now that he came in such a way to traverse it, how wonderfully it was increased in imagination! Once, too, he thought he heard a creaking noise, as though the rope was either breaking at some portion of its continuity, or as though the iron at the end of it which was grappling the *chevaux de frise* at the top of the prison wall was coming gradually off.

This was a horrible idea, but there was now no help for it. He was more than half across, and he would not go back. He paused, however, and grasped the rope tightly; for if the end attached to the prison wall were to give way, he was confident that fastened to the window-sill would not. In the course of about half a minute, as nothing occurred, he began to think he must be

mistaken, and that it was merely the straining of the rope, and the working of the hook at the end of it against the iron-work it grasped, which made the sound of such alarming import, and he went on again with renewed courage. At length, the vibration and the depression of the rope ceased, and, by stretching out his hand, Jack could grasp the iron work on the top of the wall. Another moment, and he was standing, evidently rather precariously, among it; but still he had crossed the chasm. He thought it imprudent to stand up, for fear even his shadow might be seen against the night sky by some one from the prison, and he stooped as low as he could, while, by the insufficient light in the place, he carefully examined the hold that the hook had taken. He found it perfectly fast; and as he had no sort of intention of disturbing that rope, he began, with great caution, to uncoil the one he had round his waist. He gazed down into Newgate from the top of the wall, for he knew that a small court-yard, of a triangular shape, was immediately before him, and that the only mode of getting from it into the interior of the prison was by a vaulted passage, with a door at each end of it, tolerably well secured by bolts and bars. The height was terrific.

Now Jack was in a much better position to make sure that his rope was well fastened to the iron work, and he accordingly took good care that it should be so before he let the other end of it slowly down the inner side of the wall, like some long, slender snake, making its way into the abodes of wretchedness. He grasped the rope, and slid down rapidly. He was quite sure that it was more than long enough to reach the ground, and he was not deceived, for when his feet touched the cold pavement there were some yards of the rope remaining coiled upon it. "Better than an inch to short," said Jack, as he stood in the little court-yard, feeling a little giddy with his rapid descent. A very few moments' stillness, however, sufficed to free him from that feeling, and then assuring himself that he was quite recovered, he placed the superfluous end of the rope close up against the wall; for although it was against all probability that such should be the case, he yet felt that some one might come into the court-yard. The next object was to get out of this place which he had taken so much trouble to get into, and he carefully stepped along to the passage which led from it. This was to test the correctness of his plan of the prison; if the passage was just in the place the plan indicated, then he felt that he could have abundance of confidence in all other respects—if not, he should be sadly puzzled. One, two, three, four, five six, steps counted Jack, and then he paused and felt the wall immediately before him. Yes, there was the door, true enough, studded with thick, large, iron nails, just as it was represented in the plan which he had so carefully consulted. "All right so far," said Jack; "I am not deceived." Sixteen-string Jack shook the door quietly, and then muttered to himself, "Humph! one bolt above only, and a bar." At that time Newgate depended more upon its bolts and bars than upon its locks. The art of lock-making had not reached the perfection that it has now attained, so that the skill of the cracksman of Claude Duval's time was generally more than sufficient to bid defiance to locks. Bars and bolts, however, were always more troublesome obstacles in the way of a prison escape or an entrance into a house; but even they were not unfrequently removed with great skill.

Sixteen-string Jack at once set about this work, with scarcely a doubt of its success, considering that he had with him tools and implements sufficient to fully accomplish it. With a centre bit of the most delicate and exquisite construction, he bored holes above and below the bolt, so that he could introduce the blade of a fine saw. This blade was not above two-eighths of an inch in thickness, and yet it was so excellently-tempered a piece of steel that the rough soft iron of which the bolt was composed stood no chance against it for a moment. The saw cut into it as though it had been wood. The lower bolt was not fast, but the bar still remained, and Sixteen-string Jack could easily enough have cut through that, but he knew that the passage beyond the door was paved, and he feared that the two ends of the bar might fall and

make a clattering noise that might reach the ears of some official of the prison amid the silence of the night. Some other means, then, must be resorted to to get rid of the bar. He judged that it was merely placed across the door, being lodged in a socket prepared for its reception at one end, while, no doubt it was jointed on to the strong frame-work composing the door-post at the other end. At least, he was well aware that, unless this bar was an exception to the general rule, such was the construction of it, and he set about his operations accordingly, without a moment's loss of time or consideration. By tapping the door gently with one of the implements he had brought with him he ascertained the exact place of the bar; and then, about six inches below it, he bored a hole right through the door. The centre-bit encountered an iron plate in its progress, but that was only a temporary obstruction after all, and it was soon right through. Jack was provided against this very contingency that he had to contend with, so, taking from his pocket a long soft nail of about six or eight inches, he bent it in the form of a hook, and passed it through the hole in the door, so that the hook part stuck upwards. He placed it firmly there in its place by the insertion of another straight nail, which he firmly wedged in, for he did not care to remove either of them when they had answered fully his purpose at the present time. Thus far, then, all was right. The next thing he had to do, was to lift the bar out of its rest, and that was a matter of more difficulty, for the only way in which it could be accomplished was to get something under it, which should act as a kind of lever against it; but where there is a will there is a way, and throughout the whole of his proceedings Sixteen-string Jack exemplified the truth of that well-known and somewhat venerable proverb. Another hole was bored in the door, precisely below the lower edge of the bar, and through this was introduced another bent nail, the head of which was held firmly in a pair of pinchers, so as to have a good purchase of it. By moving this slowly round, then, Jack caught the bar upon its under edge and lifted it. The only chance of failure was that the bent nail might not lift it high enough to release it from the kind of holdfast in the door-post behind which it was slipped. Jack had his doubts, but they were soon removed, for upon suddenly releasing the bar, it fell clear of the holdfast and fairly upon the hook that he had previously prepared for its reception.

"All's right," said Jack.

The door yielded to a touch, and, with a slight creak, swung back upon its massive hinges.

"So much for bolts and bars," said Sixteen-string Jack, as he at once entered the narrow passage.

To his surprise, the door at the other extremity was not fastened at all. Probably it was thought so utterly chimerical for any one to entertain the idea of getting into Newgate, that outer doors were only attended to strictly. At all events, it saved Jack some time and trouble. The plan of the prison was so firmly fixed in his mind that he knew at once where the last door led to. It was to a passage to the right and to the left, along which were cell-doors, but they were not the cells he sought, and taking the right hand branch of the passage, he passed noiselessly on. Jack had taken the precaution to draw on over his boots a pair of thick worsted stockings, which had the effect of completely deadening the sound of his footsteps, while it gave him the confident step which a man has in his boots, and which he can never have in his stocking soles merely. The passage was substantially built and vaulted. It was of about twelve feet in width, and about fifty feet in length, when it terminated at a door where there was a wicket of wire, through which the turnkey could take a good survey of the passage. Whether or not a watch was kept during the night at this wicket, Jack had no means of knowing, except by ocular demonstration. He thought it probable enough that such was the case, so he carefully hid his light, as he slowly and stealthily approached. A faint gleam, as if a lantern were upon the other side of the door almost convinced him that he should there find some one; nor was he



mistaken, although he would very gladly have found himself so. A turnkey was fast asleep in a recess in the wall upon the other side of the door; while a lamp, placed in a niche above his head, had shed the faint light into the passage which had been observed by Jack before reaching the spot. This was really a most serious obstacle. What was he to do? Certainly, sleeping as the turnkey was, and situated as Jack was, nothing could be easier than to kill him; but there was something about the cold-blooded murder of a sleeping man so repugnant to Jack's feelings, that he himself shuddered as the suggestion presented itself to him.

It was certainly possible, and only possible, that the turnkey might be so soundly sleeping as to allow Jack to open the door, by putting his arm through the little wicket, and turning the lock, and pass him without awakening him. Just possible it was, but very far indeed from being at all probable; and yet, what else could he try?

Jack felt what a ticklish thing it was to do to turn the key in the lock so softly as not to awaken the man; but he advanced to do it, and, by coming so close, he saw that the turnkey was aged. His hair, like Hamlet's father's, was a "sable silvered," and Jack looked at him with a dim perception of having seen him before.

"Alas!" thought Jack, as he looked upon the face of the slumbering turnkey, and now fully recognising him—"alas! I cannot kill him. Now I remember him well. He brought me a glass of water upon the morning of

my execution and spoke some kind words to me. No--no. I cannot kill him. Oh, God! let him sleep out, let him sleep on?"

So fervent was this ejaculation of Jack's that he almost uttered the last words aloud. The turnkey moaned slightly in his sleep, and shifted his position. Jack awaited with the stillness of death for full three minutes, and then, when he thought deep sleep had once again crept over the senses of the man who was so much in his way, he ventured to resume his operations. He thought the best plan was carefully to take out the key from the other side of the door, and put it into the lock on the side where he was. He would then have more command over it, and be much better able to turn it quite noiselessly than if it remained in its present position. He released the key from the lock with a dexterity and precision that made it quite impossible that, by so doing, the smallest alarm could be given to the sleeping turnkey, and then, transferring it to the keyhole upon the side where he himself was, he slowly turned the ponderous wards.

"Tis well," thought Jack; "I shall be able to pass him now, if the door is easy upon its hinges; but if not, God only knows what will happen. I cannot sacrifice Claude, and I cannot kill this man. Heaven help me now, for my wish is to avoid sin, not to commit it; and so I can call upon Heaven to aid me. This is no selfish expedition. I have all to lose, including life itself, and nothing to gain by it; so again I say, help me, Heaven, and deliver me from the temptation to take this man's life, by keeping him still slumbering."

Sixteen-string Jack did not expect any miracle to ensue, for the purpose of helping him to get Claude Duval out of Newgate, but after this odd kind of prayer, he certainly felt, or thought he felt—which was just the same thing, and answered the purpose fully as well—much calmer and more collected.

A malediction light upon all musical doors! Who has not had his nerves set all in a twitter by a shriek from some door that will not open quickly without one, or slowly without a lengthened, long-drawn groan, as if it were in the greatest agony in the world?

But what were the creaking of doors of ordinary domestic life, in comparison to this abominable creaking door in Newgate? for it did creak, as Jack ascertained by the slightest possible movement of it. What was he to do! There was nothing for it but boldness.

"Courage!" said Jack to himself, "courage; creaking doors will sometimes yield, like creaking human beings, to resolution; and I have known them to be swung moderately open without making the least sound. I must try, however, come what may."

If this plan were to be adopted, Jack knew well there must be no compromise with it. It was hit or miss—a kind of leap from a precipice in the dark. He might alight with safety, or he might not. All was chance. He tried to ask himself how many chances there were of the door giving a hideous scream, to one that it would open quietly; but the stupendous piece of arithmetic was beyond his power—he only felt that he was running a frightful risk, that was all. Open rushed the door. It did not scream, it did not groan, but it did worse than all that—it struck the foot of the slumbering turnkey, and aroused him in a moment. He started to his feet.

"Hillo! hillo!" he cried, "What's that?"

The real truth was, that Sixteen-string Jack was so bewildered at this most unexpected *contretemps* that for a few brief moments he did not know what he did; and yet impulsively, if not reflectively, he dashed through the open door, and gained a few yards beyond it, before he told himself how utterly useless it was now to think of doing any good by flight—flight, which would only take him deeper into the interior of Newgate, with a hue-and-cry at his heels. Sixteen-string Jack turned, and stood with his right hand plunged in the breast of his apparel, grasping the stock of one of his pistols—a weapon which he dreaded to use, and yet felt now that he must use. The turnkey had snatched the lamp from the recess where it was placed, and in a moment

he made a rush towards Jack. Another step, and it would have been his last in this world ; but he did not take that step. On the contrary, he paused for a moment, and then staggered back, gasping—

“ Good God ! ”

Jack saw his advantage in a moment, and divined at once from whence it arose. The turnkey knew him well, and took him for his own apparition. There was no longer occasion for killing. All Jack had to do was to improve the occasion. He saw that the man was almost convulsed with terror, and he was determined not to spare him. A good fright breaks no bones, thought Jack. Step by step, with a slow gliding movement, Jack approached the turnkey, who, for a few moments, was rooted to the ground with fear. A cold clammy perspiration stood upon his brow, and his limbs shook under him. At length, as Jack was coming into what he considered awful proximity to him, he managed to shuffle back a little, crying as he did so—“ I know you—I know you. Gracious goodness ! I know you.”

Jack paused, and in a deep sepulchral voice he said—“ Do you know me ? ”

“ Oh dear, yes, I—I know you. You are the ghost of Sixteen-string Jack, who—who—was executed—on the 15th of May, in the year—— ”

“ Peace ! No more ! Sit ! ”

“ Yes—yes, I—I will do anything, you like, anything you please, only don’t touch me, for that would, I feel sure drive me quite mad. I—I am sure it would. Oh, for the Lord’s sake, don’t touch me. What harm have I ever done to you ? ”

“ None ! But in the hour of my mortal tribulation, when poor human nature shrunk aghast at what it had to go through, you gave me a cup of water.”

“ Yes, I—I did.”

“ Wait then, I say to you ; you shall have your reward. Wait until I come, to you again. Do you promise me, upon your soul’s salvation, that you will not stir from that seat until I come back to you ? ”

“ Oh, yes—yes I promise.”

“ Remember me,” said Jack, imitating the ghost of Hamlet’s fraternal relative as well as he could—“ remember me ! ”

“ Yes,” gasped the turnkey.

Slowly Jack moved along the passage backwards, until he got to a turning, and then he scampered in a most unghost-like fashion ; for much time had been consumed in this rather awkward adventure with the turnkey, who, after all, when alone, might have strength of mind enough to get over his fears, and so commit some other act that might be highly detrimental to Jack’s plans. Jack, all along, from his exact recollection of the accurate plan of Newgate he had so well studied, knew precisely where he was, so that he had the great advantage of never going an inch out of his way. At the end of the passage where he was, he knew there was another door which led into a court-yard, and he knew that the little gratings near the roof which let a dim light to the row of cells, in one of which Claude was confined, looked into that yard. But he would have to unfasten a door leading from that yard, and to traverse a passage until he came to a turning at right angles with it exactly, and from that passage opened the doors of the cells, the backs of which looked into the yard. All this was clear enough, if Jack could but get so far without any interruption of any serious character. That, however, was the question ; and now another consideration came over his mind for decision, which was simply this : provided he found his way safely to Claude’s cell, and got him out of it, by what route should he attempt to take him from the prison ? It will be seen that from the first Jack had provided against the contingency of having his retreat by the way he had come cut off, by the desperate determination, if such were the case, to proceed to the regular gate at which the man who knew him by sight would be, and pass himself off there, as he had already so successfully done, as his own ghost, so frightening the man into letting him pass out.

This, however, was a most desperate expedient, and, of course, it was a thousand times better to go by the same way he came, if he could do so with any chance of safety. Jack was divided in thought, between these two modes of procedure, as he made his way hastily to the court-yard at the end of the passage in which he had been so unexpectedly delayed by the really perilous adventure that had happened to him, and which might have turned out so much worse than it really did, although he (Jack) still trembled at what might be its possible results. If anything, however, could save him from any *mal apropos* proceedings of the terrified turnkey, it would certainly be rapidity of action; so Jack, in his proceedings, now, was resolved to let no grass grow under his feet.

The door leading from the passage into the court-yard was not fastened, except by a latch, so Jack found himself in the court into which the backs of the range of cells locked, in an incredibly short space of time after leaving the bewildered turnkey in his seat. The experience he had now already had of the correctness of his plan of the prison, wonderfully encouraged him, and he proceeded to the door which led to the passage standing rectangularly to the one from which opened a suite of cells, in one of which Claude was imprisoned, without a moment's hesitation. The door was fast. St. Sepulchre's clock, dimly heard amid the stillness of the night, in the prison, struck one. Without a moment's pause, Jack now set about opening the door. It was only locked, so the difficulty was not great, and in about five minutes it yielded to him, and he at once dashed into the stone passage.

"Now for Claude," he said.

A sudden flash of light from the farther end of the court-yard almost stunned him by the suddenness with which it came across his eyes. He stood as fixed and still as a statue for a few seconds—and then, by a kind of instinct rather than reflection, he closed the open door of the passage in which he was, feeling that, if it were found in that state, it would at once give rise to a host of suspicions, which would eventuate in a search of the prison. Anything in the shape of a thorough alarm or search would, of course, prove fatal to him. He placed his ear flat against the door, and with all the power of hearing he could bring to bear against the slightest sounds, he listened to what was passing in the court-yard. Through a slight crevice, too, he could see the light which the men carried. A faint genial-like ray of it, too, came, through the key-hole of the door, and fell at his feet, but he could not for the life of him think what the party of men were about, with lights at such an hour, amid the cold and dreary intricacies of that mournful building, in which hope itself bids the world adieu!

The only thing which gave to Sixteen-string Jack a ray of hope that the appearance of the party in the court-yard of the prison in no way concerned him, was the careless manner of the men composing it. If they had been roused up by any alarm, or by any suspicions, there would have been silence, secrecy, and caution in their every movement; but such was very far from being the case, for they talked and laughed together with perfect freedom, and after a few moments, when the hot blood did not bubble so furiously from his heart to his brain, Jack was better able to understand what they said; he found that though there was something to fear, there was not so much to fear as he had at first supposed.

"I really," said one, with a dissatisfied growl, "don't see the utility of this night patrolling. One regular watchman, always on the look-out, is worth half-a-dozen such inspections as this."

"Perhaps so," said another, "but it's the governor's orders, and so it must be done."

Jack heard them go to various doors, and try them roughly one after the other, and the thought struck him that they knew the door against which he leant was not of great importance; but they would pass through the passage, to try the other one that led to the cells, or perhaps visit the cells themselves.

What was he to do?

In the passage there was not the shadow of a hiding place. The door at the other end might be fast, and what time had he to open it then? It was a desperate resource, but he felt that all he could do was to hold the door, against which he leant and listened, fast, so as to induce a belief that it was locked, and the key gone. He placed himself against it, and held it with all his force. He dreaded to look for any mode of fastening it, lest, while he was so occupied, it should be suddenly pushed open by some of the party without.

"Have you tried all those doors?" said a voice, apparently in authority.

"Yes, sir," replied a turnkey.

"Well, let us go to the cells, now. Claude, you know, is in No. 4."

To the immense relief of the listening Jack, the whole party left the courtyard, which in a few moments became again the dark and solitary place it had been before their visit.

Sixteen-string Jack now felt much more confidence in the success of his efforts than he had done before, and he had quite a brightened look of hope as he proceeded along the passage towards the only one door which, save that of the cell, shut him now out from the presence of his old friend and dear associate, Claude Duval.

"No. 4," he said; "I must recollect that the cell is No. 4."

The door which shut him out from Claude Duval was fast. Of course, though, he could open it, and in the course of about three minutes it yielded to his efforts.

Now that he was really within a very few paces of Claude Duval, Jack felt as if he could have fainted. For a moment all the strength and all the energy that had so far supported him and urged him on, fled from him, and he leant heavily against the wall, while a multitude of objects seemed to swim before his bewildered eyes.

"I shall save him," he gasped, "I shall save him! Yes, oh, yes, I feel that I shall save him."

Animated, then, by such a feeling, he at once walked on, counting the doors, until he came to No. 4. The key, for greater security against any attempts of Claude from the inside to pick the lock, was left in its place, and in addition, a very heavy, massive bar, was placed across the door. But there was Sixteen-string Jack, the truest friend that man could have, with one hand upon the massive key, and the other upon the still more massive door. In his eagerness Jack called upon Claude, forgetting that it might be dangerous to awaken an echo in such a place as that, and with such a name, too, as Claude Duval's.

"Claude, Claude," he cried, "are you there, Claude?—are you there?"

Claude had become aware that some one was outside his cell door, and he had roused himself from the partial sleep that had crept over him. He hesitated whether to say anything or not, and yet he was surprised at a visit at such a time. The hour was most unusual. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, exclaiming—"What voice is that? A dream?"

"Claude, Claude!"

"Gracious Heaven! how real—how very real. It cannot be."

The door of the cell was flung wide open, and Sixteen-string Jack stood upon the threshold, and held up the small lantern which he had from the first provided himself with. The dubious flame fell upon the pale features of Claude Duval, who stood transfixed, completely astonished, and doubting his own sanity, as he fully recognised the well-known features of Jack.

"I am mad," he said.

"No, Claude, no, it is, in truth, your old friend."

Claude rushed to him, and clasped his arms round him, exclaiming—"It is, indeed, no delusion. Good Heaven! who would have dreamt of this? It is too bewildering. In the name of all that is wonderful and miraculous, how came you here, Jack?"

"There is no miracle in the matter, Claude. It is I; and the only means I really had of getting here consisted in a fixed determination that nothing should stop me from coming to you."

Claude still looked bewildered, as, indeed, well he might; but Jack now carefully closed the cell door, lest the sound of their voices should, amid those tube-like passages which abounded in the prison, be conveyed to the ear of some more than usually attentive and observant officer; and then he said, with much emotion in his tones—"Let us not, Claude, speak of my coming here—it is of our leaving that we must speak. Your better judgment must come to my aid in this matter, when I have explained to you all the circumstances. Listen to me, Claude."

Jack then rapidly detailed to Claude Duval all that he had done, step by step, to get at him, and the precise aspect of affairs, with all the risks and all the chances of failure or success, in leaving the prison. He concluded by saying—"Now, Claude, you know all; and the question you have to consider is, whether we are to try to leave by the way I came, or by the regular entrance, where the man—who, no doubt, will be frightened at my ghost, as he will fancy me to be—is upon duty?"

Claude buried his face in his hands for some few moments, and then, looking up, he said—"The way you came, Jack."

"You think so?"

"Yes, there is less risk, I think. But, if done at all, it ought to be done very quickly. For your sake, Jack, I would start at once; but you must lend me a helping hand, first. You perceive they had a good opinion of my powers, as well as my inclination to escape, for they have placed upon my wrists these iron bracelets, which, under any circumstances, I confess I should not be sorry to be at once rid of."

"That is easily accomplished," said Jack, as he produced one of his small, exquisitely-tempered files, and soon released Claude from the handcuffs which in that cell he was burthened with, more from a piece of personal spite on the part of the governor, than from any notion that they were wanted for security's sake.

"You are free from that encumbrance, Claude," said Jack, as the handcuffs fell with a clash upon the stone floor.

They left the cell, but before doing so, Claude Duval charred the end of a small piece of wood, which he cut from the door with the aid of Jack's knife, and wrote upon the whitened wall of the cell—

"Claude Duval escaped from Newgate, September 13th, 1778."

"They may think that a piece of assurance," said Claude; "but it is astonishing how people will take bold assertions for the truth. I will be bound to say, now, that there is not a turnkey in Newgate who reads that, but who will have his energies of pursuit quite crippled at the idea that it is so perfectly true, that any search for me will be useless."

"It will have some effect," said Jack. "But now, Claude, take this."

He handed to Claude Duval one of the pistols with double barrels which he had brought with him, carefully loaded; and Claude at once placed it in his breast, saying as he did so—"I hope I may not have to use it; but I am struggling for my life, and those who stop me to-night must be made to feel the importance of the stake for which I play. I am now ready, Jack."

"Come on, then. But we will make the cell door fast?"

"I think we shall see the daylight soon, Jack," said Claude.

"I'm sure of it," said Jack. "Push on."

"We have plenty of time," said Claude, "it is now striking four."

"Yes," replied Jack. "The night has seemed an amazingly long one to me. I thought it was at least an hour later, but we don't know yet what delays we may meet with. This way, Claude, this way."

The small, short passage, with the two doors, from the corridor of the cells to the little court-yard where the inspecting party had so lately appeared, was soon traversed, and the cool fresh air of the yard, fresh and delightful to Claude,

in comparison with the close atmosphere of his cell, came in a most welcome gush upon his brow.

"I breathe again," he said.

"Ah, Claude, you shall breathe freer still than this, if we are but successful."

"Where else, then, upon our route does this yard lead to?"

"There are two other doors leading from it besides that which we shall leave it by and that by which we have entered. One of these doors leads to the interior of the jail, and the other is a place which is marked in my plan as a deserted well-yard, where are some cells which have gone to ruin and are not used."

They will have to build a new Newgate, Jack, if they want to keep it secret from you, I see," said Claude.

"They will, indeed. I have not had much time to study it, but my knowledge of it shows only how quickly one may acquire anything when one really sets about it with a will."

"True, Jack, true; and now I presume this turnkey, whom you so much astonished is our principal danger; in reality, if we pass him we shall be comparatively safe?"

"I think so, and I hope so."

"Well, then, let us push on, with the sincere hope that his superstitious fears have kept him chained to the spot upon which you left him."

"Which may or may not be," said Jack. "If he has recovered he has given an alarm, and then we are lost. Many men in my circumstances, and with such an object in view as I had, would not have scrupled to take his life; but I could not do it. No, I did think of it, but I could not bring my mind to do it."

"At which, let the consequences be what they may, I rejoice, Jack."

"We are now close by the passage in which I left the man," said Jack, "and the most absolute caution must be the word with us."

It was true, indeed. They had both arrived at the end of the most critical passage in which Jack had encountered the turnkey, whose superstition had got so completely the better of his reason at seeing, what he certainly very naturally took for the apparition of Sixteen-string Jack. Jack went first as they traversed this passage, for if the turnkey was still in his place, and at all dubious upon the matter, it might fairly enough be supposed that the second apparition of Sixteen-string Jack would have a great effect upon him, and probably induce a relapse of his fears. By far the greater probability, however, was, that he had been visited by the little party who were doing the duty of inspecting the prison, and in that case it was not at all to be supposed for a moment that he should have kept what had appeared to him a secret. If he had disclosed it then to the authorities of the jail, one of two things must have been the consequence, either that the whole matter was believed to be a mere dream of the turnkey's, and no notice to be taken of it beyond a laugh at him, or that it was thought there was matter in it worth attention, in which case Jack and Claude were likely enough to meet with rather a warm reception in the passage. As they crept on slowly, they soon began to feel assured that things were not, at all events, exactly as they would have ordered them if they had had the power of so doing. Jack turned, and laid his hand upon the arm of Claude Duval, as he said to him in the lowest possible whisper—"Hush! there are voices."

"Where?" asked Claude, in the same tone.

"In advance."

"Well, Jack, I think I am calmer than you are, for great anxiety for my escape has rather shattered your nerves, so allow me, for both our sakes, to go on a little and listen."

Claude crept on so silently that it was quite impossible that any one could have heard him, and in this way he succeeded in approaching quite near enough to hear the dialogue that was proceeding, and which was evi-

dently taking place around the turnkey who had been so much terrified by Jack.

"But I tell you I did see him," persisted the turnkey; "I saw him as plainly as I now see any of you."

"And you spoke to it?"

"I did; and another thing that makes me quite clear about it, too, is its mentioning, as I told you, about the glass of water that I handed to Sixteen-string Jack before he stepped into the cab to go to Tyburn. You may laugh at it, or make what joke of it you please, but I shall believe it to my dying day, for I cannot find the slightest room for any doubt about it."

"And you say this ghost promised to come again? That's the point, you know, for us to know."

"Yes it did."

"Very well, then I promise myself the pleasure, if it does come, of making its ghostly head acquainted with a pair of slugs from my pistols. I have been in Newgate some time, and never heard of any ghosts till to-night, I'm sure."

"Perhaps, Master Watts," said the old turnkey, "you will come to hear more of this than you exactly like."

Claude Duval had heard quite as much as it was necessary for him to hear; he felt that the danger of proceeding any further in that direction was immense, and he slowly and cautiously, as he had advanced, made his way back to Sixteen-string Jack, and related to him word for word the conversation that had taken place.

"What's to be done?" said Jack.

"I really don't know," responded Claude. "What do you think of trying the regular gate in the Old Bailey; the risk of doing so is, I dare say, quite terrific, but it seems we have no choice."

"It does, indeed; it would be only over the dead bodies of three men that we could proceed by the way I came, and that we are not the sort of persons to think of. Well, Claude, come to the gate; if we meet no one as we go, there is a chance for us then."

"A forlorn one, Jack, but a forlorn and faint hope is infinitely better than none at all, so go we will."

Jack knew the way perfectly well, and he turned off to the right, and was proceeding without much thought of danger, when a broad flash of light came across their eyes, and caused them both to pause. At the same moment, in a strange monotonous kind of way, a bell began to toll.

"What is the meaning of that?" said Claude.

"Lost! lost!" cried Jack.

"How do you mean? Come, come, Jack, do not give way in this manner."

"You are lost, Claude; that bell announces to the whole of the officials of the prison that a prisoner has escaped, or is attempting to do so, and has left his cell. There is no longer a hope; in the course of a few moments the whole place will be, as it were, under arms. Alas, my poor friend!"

Claude passed his hand across his brow, and, for a moment or two, felt confused and irresolute, but that feeling, along with the first start that Jack's doleful words had given him, soon passed away, and, starting like a man who had newly awakened from a fearful dream, he said—"I won't give up so easily. Do you not hear, Jack, that footsteps are advancing?"

"I do, I do."

"A party of men is evidently then coming down the passage; if we do not choose to fall into their hands let us hasten ourselves. This way, Jack, this way."

"Oh, Claude—Claude!"

"Jack, my old friend, I implore you to rouse yourself. If you do not, you will sacrifice me, for I will perish by you. Let me implore you to shake off

"this blight which at times obscures your mind. Come, Jack, tell me that you are all right again."

"I—I am!"

"That will do; now what we have to do must be done boldly, or it must fail. Do you hear, Jack? We cannot, must not attempt to leave Newgate just now. It would be to court destruction if we were to attempt to do so."

"What shall we do, Claude? my mind leans upon yours. Only tell me what I am to do?"

The light that had so disagreeably surprised them now flashed more brightly, and the sound of advancing footsteps was much more plain than it had been before. Sixteen-string Jack still stood irresolute, and no doubt would have fallen a victim to the officers of the prison, had not Claude been with him at that most critical and important moment. Without saying another word, Claude held Jack tightly by the arm, and led him along swiftly and unresistingly by that way which they had come. To have proceeded in any other direction would have been madness. Claude Duval, as he had followed Jack through the various passages leading from his cell to that spot upon which they had paused with a consciousness of so much danger, had been far from unmindful of the route which he had taken, and now he pursued it with unerring exactitude. There was no close pursuit, for the officers knew not where any intruder or partially escaped prisoner was to be found. They only knew that there was an alarm of something of the kind, or else the bell would not have been sounded, and that it was now their duty to leave no spot of the jail unvisited, so that Claude (when with Jack he reached the courtyard, from whence, in their progress, Jack had told him of several outlets) had full time to think and to speak to his now somewhat re-nerved companion.

"Jack," he said, "I am certain that any attempt to leave Newgate now would be madness, but from the inscription upon the wall of my cell they will think me gone; and as for your coming, they know nothing of it at all, if we except the turnkey's story of a ghost. Our plan, then, is to find some hiding place, if we can until the present agitation and pursuit is over. Can you hit upon such a place? If we can hide until nightfall again, we shall have every chance of escaping by some means. Do you understand me, Jack?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK was slowly recovering from the shock that his mind had received, consequent upon the apparent failure of the means he had adopted to insure the escape of Claude from that gloomy home which held him in its stern embrace, and he could now, with something of a feeling of energy, listen and reply to Claude in that hour of their mutual danger.

"You are right, Claude," he said, "we have no resource but to hide, and there is no likelier place than that court-yard with the well in it, that in my plan is named as being never visited."

"Come on, then—come on; now, Jack, you are yourself again," said Claude, as he nimbly clasped Jack's arm. They now rapidly proceeded to that part of the prison which presented such a chance of concealment for them.

The great utility of the plan of Newgate, which Sixteen-string Jack had with so much difficulty obtained, was never more apparent than now, when probably, upon the promptness with which they could reach the place they had been speaking of, depended their safety from immediate arrest. Anything in the shape of incertitude, which would have led to wandering about the gloomy passages of the prison, would have been attended by more than danger, for capture would have amounted to a certainty. A very few minutes,

however, with Jack's excellent local knowledge of the place, brought them to where they wished to be, and the door which led to the deserted place, and which, by its appearance, had evidently not been opened for a long time, was before them. The sounds of alarm from the other parts of the prison still came plainly upon their ears, although they felt that they had very considerably distanced the party of officers who, but a few moments before, had been so immediately in their vicinity.

"The great object in opening this door," said Jack, as he produced his skeleton keys, "will be to leave no marks of its having been meddled with."

"Certainly," said Claude; "but that, I fear, Jack, you will not be able to do; at all events, delay to us is death, so open it I pray you, come what may, and that quickly, too. Are you calm and cool enough to do so, Jack?"

"Quite."

Jack soon proved he uttered the truth, for with great care he forced back the lock of the door, and then it yielded upon its rusty hinges with a dull creaking sound, displacing no end of spiders' webs, for the long legged spinners had taken possession of that door, as though it had become their undoubted property, and no doubt were proportionally indignant at the manner in which they were now so rudely ejected. They both now paused for a few moments before passing that doorway, in order that they might come to some correct conclusion as to the whereabouts of their enemies. The sound of pursuit seemed to be dying away, rather than approaching, and it would appear as though, without the least suspicion of where the party was of whom they were in quest, the officers were ranging about the prison, seeking for some evidences of the mode of flight that had been adopted by Claude Duval. Indeed, it was then the fixed opinion of the officials that, by some means, he was out of Newgate. It was the hand-writing upon the wall which had produced almost as much sensation upon them as upon the monarch of old in his banquet halls.

"Close the door, Jack," said Claude. "Close the door. What a strange smell there is in this place. Do you not remark it?"

"Yes. When the old Newgate that was burnt down was built, this spot was a burying-ground within the walls. The architect of the new structure rejected it, and left it as it was. No doubt that strange smell partly proceeds from the former use to which the place was put, as well as from its confined and long disused situation."

Jack found rather more difficulty in locking the door again than he had found in opening it; but he did, however, succeed in doing so, after a few moments' striving, and then they both tried to pierce the darkness that was around them, in order to discover the precise localities of that spot, which might or might not be a place of safety for them.

"How very dark," said Claude.

"It is, indeed."

I suppose, Jack, it would be imprudent to show a light here?"

"It would, Claude, for although there is no one here to see it, yet some reflected ray, from our lantern, were we to light it, might find its way into some portion of the prison, and betray us. No, Claude, we must trust to our other senses here, if we cannot, amid the darkness, make that of seeing sufficiently available."

"Agreed, Jack; I think I can discern objects a little now."

"And I."

"A cloud or two, no doubt, has passed over the night sky, leaving it clearer than before, or else we are like the cats, getting so accustomed to the darkness that we can see in it almost as well as with a light."

"What do you see?"

"Some dark object about a dozen paces to the left, Jack."

"Oh, it is the old deserted well. It is described in my plan as an old fashioned cord and bucket well with a windlass, such as are fast disappearing even in the country places of England. It must be that which you see, Claude."

"I have no doubt about it. What is that?"

Suddenly one of the walls of the place in which they were had upon it a long streak of glittering light, which, after flickering for some few moments to and fro, disappeared, making, by the contrast that it had established, the darkness look much more profound than it had before been, as well as filling the minds of Jack and Claude with amazement to know whence it could have come. For the space of about a minute they both remained silent, and then Claude, drawing close to Jack, said, in a cautious whisper—"Danger!"

"Do you think so?" Where did the light come from, Claude? Can you form any guess concerning it?"

"No, Jack, but I have a certainty. It came in from a wide crack at the top of your door, through which we have just passed, and I have no sort of doubt but that our enemies are upon the other side of it."

"Ho! ho!"

"Hush! Creep forward with me, for we ought both to be convinced. Creep forward with me, and let us listen."

Jack did this, and in another moment he and Claude had laid their ears close to the door, when they plainly heard upon the other side the murmur of whispered conversation. What was said, however, was uttered with so much caution, that not one word of it could be distinctly heard; so that our adventurers could gather nothing that would suffice to let them know what amount of information their enemies had, or if it were, after all, only suspicion upon which they were proceeding. But in either case the danger was of the most imminent description, and required from them the most prompt action to meet it, and counteract it, if indeed that, under the circumstances, were at all possible. At all events, they were not induced to succumb to adversity.

"Jack?"

"Yes, Claude."

"What are they doing there? No good. Let us go down the well."

"Down the what?"

"Down the well, Jack. Now, listen to me: those fellows upon the other side are fumbling with the lock of the door in a manner that quite convinces me they have not got the right key. That circumstance will delay them for some time, but not for very long. During that time, you and I must do something, Jack, and I think you do not intend to be taken?"

"No, Claude, not while there is one breath, or above one, left in my body."

"Very well; then the well is our only resource, Jack. It may be that there is water enough to drown us or not. At all events, we can but try; possibly it may never strike the officers that we should seek such a place of shelter, and then we may save ourselves; but if they do think of it, I am of opinion it will require more cool courage than any of them possess to come down to look for us. What say you, Jack—do you agree with me or not?"

"I do agree with you, Claude. I will descend with you at once. Come on; we are in desperate circumstances, and desperate chances in the shape of remedies must be the order of the day. Come on. But yet one moment. I think I can, without the observation of those on the other side of the door, increase the difficulty of undoing it. You have a ring upon your finger, Claude?"

"Oh, yes! I did not think of that. Fall to, Jack."

Sixteen-string Jack took the ring which Claude handed to him, and violently inserted it into the keyhole of the door, where it would be an insurmountable obstacle to any key or picklock acting upon the wards of the lock. Nothing now but downright force could suffice to open that door. It was almost questionable whether the object of merely looking into that court-yard, with the very forlorn hope of discovering there Claude Duval, would be sufficient to induce the officers to take so much trouble.

Suddenly, however, the state of doubt was put an end to; for a voice cried out without any caution at all, "Break the lock off. We cannot stay here all night."

It was the voice of the governor himself, who, while he felt that he should be obliged to tell the sheriffs that he had searched everywhere in the prison, yet did not by any means relish the job of doing so, at such an hour especially.

Now that the governor had set the example of abandoning all caution, the officers followed it, and one said, "There is something in the lock, sir; nobody can open it."

"But it must be opened. Fetch a mallet and chisel, one of you. We must look everywhere, or I shall not be able to make my report, although I think he is fairly gone."

"Courage!" whispered Claude to Jack; "our danger is not, after all, so great as I apprehended. Truly that announcement on the wall of my cell has been more implicitly believed than I should have supposed possible in such an atmosphere as this."

The court-yard in which they were was three-cornered. There was not throughout it the veriest shadow of a place of concealment besides the well, so that if the door should really be forced open, of which there now seemed to be no doubt at all, the discovery of the fugitives became a positive certainty unless they were in the well, or the officers shut their eyes. Now the first of these conditions was probable enough, but the second by no means bore such an air, and, accordingly, Jack and Claude with stealthy steps made their way towards the well. They found, both by the feel and by observation in the faint night light, that the bucket was down in the well, and the cord all unwound from the windlass, conditions which they considered to be favorable, inasmuch as they could easily slide down by the cord to the depths below. It was certainly rather a nervous, uncomfortable step, in the dark, too, and with such utter ignorance regarding the depth and construction of the place to which, upon a dependant cord, they were to make their way; but, as Claude said, truly the preponderance of evils was the other way, so he clutched the rope firmly, saying to Jack—"I will descend first, and if there should be no possibility of reaching the bottom in consequence of the depth of water or otherwise, we must both keep to the rope until the officers have made the inspection of the court-yard."

"Very well, Claude; but let me go first."

"No, Jack, no. 'Tis for my sake you have come into such danger, when you might have remained in safety, and I shall take the first of such chances as these, at all events, upon myself. Say no more, Jack; I am resolved upon it, and here goes. Perhaps, after all, it is right enough, for the old well may be dry."

"Be careful, Claude, be careful—I implore you be careful."

"All's right," said Claude, as he flung himself from the edge of the wall by the cord, "all's right, Jack—good bye!"

The cord snapped in a moment, and down went Claude from before the eyes of the agonised Jack to the bottom of the well. It would be quite impossible for any language to do justice to the state of Jack's feelings at this moment. He saw Claude cast his feet off the edge of the wall with something of a shudder, as though a presentiment of what was about to occur had come at that moment over him. He had heard the old rotten rope make a crack, and then part its threads with a sudden snap; and he had seen Claude, the dear companion of his life, disappear to what surely could be nothing but certain death. Oh, who could paint the desolation of Jack's soul at that dreadful moment? Great griefs come with a stunning effect upon the mind, and so, for a few moments, Jack stood upon the spot he occupied as still as though he had been turned to stone. Then, with a deep groan, and giving up all hope or desire for himself, he fell in a strange huddled-up position, with his head resting upon his hands, at the side of the well.

"Lost, lost, lost!" was all he could say.

Alas, poor Jack! and is this, indeed, the reward of all your romantic devotion to your friend—is this to be the melancholy end of all your cogitations

—all your plans and projects, and vast exertions! Is Claude, whom you love, to vanish from you to death in such a way; and are you never again to look upon that face, or hear that voice call you friend? Alas, again we say, poor Jack! If all this be so, then, indeed, will the bitterness of death be past. Better for you had you remained unrestored to that troublous existence, which had passed away from you, before that man of much skill, and no honesty, had resuscitated you to make you the victim you were for a time made.

"I will perish too," cried Jack, rising, "I will spring down the well."

"Stop, Jack," said the well-known voice of Claude, in an anxious whisper; "mind what you are about; it is only about five feet deep, and quite dry, and a lot of straw at the bottom of it."

Jack's brain absolutely reeled at this most unexpected turn of fortune, and he had to hold by the framework of the old windlass to save himself from falling, while for the space of about half a minute he made sure that he should faint. All the blood seemed to have crowded round his heart.

Claude, when he felt the rope of the old windlass cracking under his weight, certainly had made one desperate effort to reach again with his feet the brink of the well, but he failed in so doing, and at the moment that the last thread of the rope parted, he gave himself up for lost, and experienced all the mental agony inseparable from such a condition. The reason that, upon finding how much he was deceived as to the depth of the well, he had not upon the instant told Jack of his safety, was simply that he was unable to do so. His nervous system had received a shock of no common severity, and his imagination for a few minutes so far got the better of reason and facts, that he lay upon the straw, and hay, and rubbish, which was at the bottom of the shallow well, quite as incapable of movement as though he had fallen fifty feet instead of only five. It takes some time before a man can positively assure himself of safety after he has previously assured himself of something very much indeed the reverse. During the period, then, that it took Claude Duval to recover, poor Jack suffered all the mental agony to which we have alluded, without having the power to depict it in absolute words, and now that he, Claude, had spoken to him, it was his turn to be astonished at getting no answer, for Claude did not, at the moment, exactly think or contemplate that joy ties the tongue sometimes as effectually as any other sudden shock. At length he got alarmed.

"Jack," he said, "what is the matter with you? Why don't you speak?"

"Yes, Claude, yes," was all Jack could say.

"Oh, I understand," said Claude. "You had given me up, Jack?"

"I had, indeed."

"Oh, you should not have done that, Jack. I begin myself to think I have as many lives as a cat. I could not have fallen upon any feather-bed that would have been more soft, and really more comfortable to the bones, than the mass of straw and hay and other matters in this place. It is a puzzle to me, completely."

"So it is to me," said Jack. "But I care for nothing, now that I know you are alive, Claude. Oh, I shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I saw you go."

"And I, Jack, shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I felt myself going."

"No doubt, Claude, it must have been most horrible."

"Such a sensation once in a life is quite enough, or rather this, it is once too many."

"It is, Claude. But hark!"

As he spoke, they both heard distinctly the sound of hammering at the door leading to where they were, which was sufficiently suggestive of the fact of the arrival of the mallet and chisel, which the governor had sent for a short time before. It was pretty evident that the door would soon yield to the persuasive influence of the blows that were given to it by a vigorous hand.

"Now we are lost," said Jack.

"Not at all," said Claude,—“not at all.”

"But what shall we do?"

"I will tell you. Come down here, by me, Jack. There is soft rubbish enough at the bottom of this place to cover us up most completely; and that is the only chance we have. The officers may be content with a very cursory observation of this place, in which event we are perfectly safe by covering ourselves up in the straw. Always recollect, Jack, that there is one thing in our favor, and that is, that they don't expect to find anything here at all, you know."

"I admit that, Claude," whispered Jack; "and I likewise see that what you advise is the only thing that can be done, so the sooner we do it the better. Mind yourself, Claude—here I am."

"All's right,—jump."

Down jumped Jack, who found indeed, as Claude had said, that the bottom of the well was some feet thick of hay and straw, although how it got there was quite a mystery to him, as well as to Claude. However, they were not disposed to waste precious time in conjectures respecting a matter which, let it have occurred how it might, was quite a subject for congratulation to them both.

"We must not be very particular," said Claude, "whether we are smothered or not, so long as we elude the officers; so come, Jack, let us burrow down in this straw and hay, as far as it will by any means allow us so to do. Hark! hark!"

"I hear," said Jack; "they have broken down the door at last, and will be in the court-yard now before we can count four. Now, Claude, I think we shall do. How do you feel?—comfortable, I hope?"

"All the better for finding you in good spirits, Jack. I think we are as completely hidden as the babes in the wood, when the birds—so says the myth—covered them with alder leaves to get rid of them."

"Hush! hush! They come, now—they come now! Do not speak or move again, for our lives' sakes."

They were now perfectly still. The hay and straw was about two feet above them, and, save that the surface had rather a tossed and tumbled appearance, no one would for a moment have suspected that any one was there. It was quite a pity that they had no means of righting the disordered surface of the rubbish that was above them. But it was not to be thought of, and in a few moments they were completely engaged in listening to the conversation of the officers and the governor, who all entered the yard in rather a tumultuous manner, several of them speaking together.

"Silence!—silence!" said the governor, "we shall do no good with all this noise. Hold up the lanterns."

Several lanterns were held up at arm's length, and they sufficed to shed sufficient light over the place to make every portion of it dimly visible, but yet sufficiently visible to prove that no one was there crouching in any corner for concealment. A pause ensued while the lanterns were thus held up.

"Oh, of course, there's no one here," said the governor; "how should there be?"

"Yes," said an officer, "it was all very well to come here, because we were going over the prison; but if I might presume to have an opinion, I should say that it's likely enough Claude Duval is on the western road by this time, and has cried "Stand and deliver!" to some one with a sufficiently heavy purse to make it worth his while."

"I don't know that," said a third, "how did he leave the prison, if he have left it? Show me his mode of leaving, and I'll be among the first to say good-bye to him, but I am not going exactly to take Duval's own word that he has left old Newgate so cleverly. Out of his cell he may and has got, but there's a fire as well as a frying-pan."

"Oh, very well, Mr. Long," said the governor; "we all know your tact in these things, that is your opinion is it? Very well, Mr. Long, as you think that Claude Duval is not out of Newgate——"

"Which is just what I do think," said Long, rather unceremoniously interrupting the Governor.

"Well, then, we will look in impossible places for him."

"The well, for instance, there," said Long.

Both Jack and Claude at these words gave themselves mentally up for lost. It seemed to them quite impossible now that anything could prevent a thorough investigation of the well. They dared not speak to each other, even in the faintest whisper, for fear of being overheard, but, with each a double-barrelled pistol in their hands, they prepared themselves for the worst, with a fixed and thorough determination that they would neither of them be taken alive by the officers, who would so glory in their defeat. The light flashed from wall to wall of the old deserted court-yard, and when the officers surrounded the old well, they looked like a parcel of wild religionists coming to celebrate some abstruse ceremony at that still hour, when no eye save their own and those of the Eternal could look upon their actions.

"I never was here before," said the governor, "although I have resided in Newgate now for five years. Is it really a well?"

"Yes," said Long, the officer. "I have heard speak of it. There was some underground communication between it and some vaults, it is said, that ultimately led out into a cellar in Newgate-market, and that was the reason bricks and dry rubbish were shot into it until it was nearly filled up, they say. You see there's a lot of straw there now."

"And how came straw and hay there, I wonder?" said the governor. "It don't seem a likely place for such matters."

"Why, I have heard," said Long—who, to Claude Duval's apprehension, seemed to know a great deal too much—"I have been told, that many years ago, when the sheriffs visited Newgate, their horses were always turned into this yard, and that in one corner of it there was constantly kept a quantity of fodder, which may account for the hay and straw that from time to time have collected in the old well."

"Oh, very likely. Very likely," said the governor.

There was a pause of some few minutes' duration now, after which one of the officers said—"Well, I don't see anything."

"Are you speaking to the well?" said Long.

A general laugh resulted, which somehow did not please the governor, who said rather tartly—"Mr. Long, you seem to know or to suspect more than any one else does in this affair. Pray take your own course, and you will oblige me. If you make any discovery, of course it will redound very much to your advantage with the sheriffs, but you know all that, I dare say. You may get into the well if you like."

"No, thank you, sir."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"Ahem! only to try an experiment. I have got here my pistols, loaded with a pair of bullets each, and I only intend to fire them into the old well, that is all. It is a fancy of mine, in which I hope I may be indulged."

"Oh, certainly."

It was evident that Mr. Long had his suspicions, but nothing more, that Claude Duval might be hidden in the well, and he thought that if he had been there, and any one had proposed firing a pair of pistols into it, loaded with a couple of balls each, he would certainly have jumped out and given himself up. He was rather disappointed there, as all remained perfectly quiet as before he had made his speech.

"Very well," he said, in a loud voice. "I shall now proceed to fire into the well, just for the fun of the thing."

All remained perfectly still, and the governor gave a stout laugh, as much

as to gay—"Well, this, in my opinion, is rather absurd. I don't know what you expect."

Long was getting very much nettled at the grin that his brother officers had upon their faces at the great defeat of his cleverness. It was rather in anger than with any other feeling that he drew one of his pistols from his pocket, and presented it down the old well.

"You are more fond of throwing away powder and ball than I should be," said the governor.

"I don't believe now," said Long, "that it is of any use, but it was worth the trial. However, as I said I would have a shot into the old well, I will do so, and here goes, come of it what may."

Bang! went the pistol. The officers hardly felt interested in the result of the shot, so convinced were they that Long's cunning for once had completely failed him; and when the smoke cleared away, and everything was as quiet as before, they were not at all surprised, nor in truth was he, for he considered that the threat ought to have been amply sufficient to disclose to light any one who had sought refuge down the old well. Mr. Long reasoned like many of his betters, namely, upon what he himself would do under certain circumstances, and then concluded that that was just what everybody else would do. A very popular mistake that of yours, Mr. Long.

"Perhaps you are satisfied now, Mr. Long," said the governor "that there is no one in the old well. Are you?"

"Yes, I am, sir" said Long; "but still I thought it was quite necessary to try the experiment. I once got a prisoner out of a coffin by the same means: at the last moment, just as I was about to fire, up he jumped and gave up."

"But if the prisoner had not been in the coffin he could not have jumped up," said one of the officers, gravely; "and in the present case nothing will convince me that Claude Duval is not at liberty. I feel as sure of that, as that we shall have him again some day. Everybody has his time, though, and his, I think, has not yet come, that's all."

"Well, come along, then," said the governor; "I am tired of the night air if you are not."

It was evident to all that the governor was not only not sorry at the supposed escape of Claude Duval, but that he viewed with anything but eyes of favor any exertions that were made to capture him again. Why he did so was, after what the reader knows of his connivance with Tom Brereton, sufficiently apparent. A few moments more and the court-yard, with its old well, was in total darkness and silence. It seemed, for a few minutes, as though it would be years again before a human voice would awaken the echoes of that old, deserted, and most melancholy place. But for all that, there were living, beating hearts close at hand, who would soon banish desolation and silence from that spot;—it was not quite sacred to the worms and beetles of Newgate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ALL was still as death itself for the space of about a quarter of an hour; and then a faint voice spoke. It was the voice of Sixteen-string Jack, but weak and trembling. Under any other circumstances Claude could scarcely have said that it was his old friend's tones that smote his ears.

"Claude, Claude, speak to me, if it be but one word, to tell me you are not hurt."

"No, Jack, no. Are you?"

"Thank—God—I——"

Speak again—speak again. What would you say, Jack? You do not



know how much you alarm me by breaking off in such a way. For Heaven's sake, Jack let me hear your voice again!"

All was still. No voice responded to this earnest appeal of Claude's, and, quite unable longer to control his impatience to know what was the matter with Jack, he threw off the heap of rubbish that had so well concealed him in the well, and again cried, as he struggled to his feet—

"If you can speak to me, Jack, and it is only one word, it will be the most acceptable favor you could ever do me in all your life."

There was no answer. In perfect desperation Claude felt about him until his hand rested upon a face. It must be Jack's; but it was cold, and the damp of death appeared, to Claude's imagination, to be upon it.

"My poor friend," he cried, "my best, bravest, and most devoted Jack, they have killed thee, have they? Oh, how much rather would I that the bullet had found its way to my heart than to yours! I am more desolate without thee, Jack, than as if all the world had slipped from me. I scarcely know if my own Cicely would have been a greater loss to me than you are, my old and true-hearted comrade."

Claude had become regardless of his own safety now, and he sat upon the edge of the old well, and covering up his face with both his hands, he wept like a child. There came no sound upon his ears but the mournful echo of his own deep sobs. He felt how truly alone he was. But this gush of warm natural feeling was not likely to last long with such a man as Claude Duval.

After the first effort of grief for his old friend, indignation against those who had taken his life became the uppermost feeling in his mind.

"Wait awhile, Mr. Long," he said; "wait awhile. You and I will meet again in this world yet, when I shall be able to pay you for your wonderful cleverness in firing into the well, and the payment shall be of a character that I doubt not you will consider to be much more than ample."

These thoughts of avenging Jack's death recovered Claude from the deep dejection into which he had fallen, and he soon set about taking active steps for placing himself in a very different position to what he then was. First of all, though, he determined upon taking a last look at the face of Jack, and for this purpose he took from his pocket some phosphorous matches and prepared a light, by the aid of which he stooped down into the well and removed the straw and other rubbish from off Jack. His first sight of his old friend horrified him, for blood was upon his face.

"Oh! Jack, Jack!" he said, "hear me, thou good spirit, and I will swear——"

"Claude," said Jack, "is it really you?"

Had a thunderbolt suddenly fallen at Claude's feet, he could not have been more thoroughly astounded than at this unexpected incident. So firm had been his persuasion, he knew not why, that Jack was dead, that he had never thought of the possibility of his only being in a state of syncope or swoon; but now that truth, for a truth it was, flashed across his mind in a moment.

"He lives! he lives!" said Claude. "Oh, yes! he lives! Speak again, Jack!"

"Where are we?"

"In the deserted well in the old court-yard of Newgate. But tell me, where are you hurt, Jack, and how do you feel?"

"Faint! faint!"

"And I cannot aid you—not even a drop of water."

"There's a small flask of brandy in my left-hand pocket, Claude. The rascal hit me somewhere in the shoulder, and pain, or loss of blood, made me faint away, I think. Oh, I remember it all now."

"Do you?"

"Yes, yes! Oh! Claude, we have much to do—I shall now only encumber you, and so, Claude—so you must now make up your mind to leave me."

"If I do, may I be d—d."

"Hush! hush!—not so loud. The brandy has revived me, Claude. If you could manage to tie a handkerchief or two round my wound, I really think I might move. But be careful of the matches, Claude. Here is the lantern; it will be better, I think."

Claude lit another phosphorous match, and by its light he saw the small lantern, which he soon ignited; so that he was able to throw a good ray of illumination upon Jack, as he now sat half up in the well, with his hand upon his wounded shoulder.

"Courage, courage!" said Claude. "You will do well yet, Jack. Don't you think, now, that the worst danger is really over?"

"I hope so, Claude."

"Then—then, I think, by making this one handkerchief up into a kind of ball and binding it tightly down over your wound with the other, that I shall stop the bleeding for you. How do you feel, Jack?"

"Much better—much better. But, Claude, you must make me one promise."

"A hundred, if you like. What is it?"

"If I faint again at any moment which is critical as regards your escape, you must promise that you will not let me be an impediment, Claude."

"Oh, Jack—Jack!"

"What is the matter, Claude?"

"Nothing, only I find that we are not quite so well acquainted with each

other as we ought to be—that's all, Jack; but say no more. There, you can stand very well, and you have. I see, the use of both your arms, notwithstanding the wound in your shoulder; all's right. Do you think you can really climb a rope yet? Oh, yes—you smile. Come, that's a good sign, at all events, Jack. Now lean upon me, old friend, and out we go from Newgate. Why, this affair will be spoken of yet, and the way Claude Duval and his friend Jack escaped from Newgate will form many a comment. Come, come, all's right. Why, you are as well as ever. now!"

After Jack had walked a little, and taken another dip at the brandy, he felt so much better, that he got quite in good spirits, and said—"Now, Claude, we must pass the turnkey, who was frightened at my appearance before. Most likely he is alone again now, now, as the alarm has subsided, and I am quite convinced that that will be a safer course than making any attempt by the front entrance, although a man is on the look-out whose senses are a little shattered."

"I think so too, Jack. Let us proceed at once; this state of suspense is worse than anything. I will follow you, but not so closely as to be seen."

They easily made their way now through the various doors which before they had passed, and when they were tolerably near the narrow stone vaulted passage, in which the turnkey sat, Jack thought of a plan of increasing the supernatural character of his appearance, which Claude, when he saw the effect, admitted did so considerably, and yet it was very simple. It merely consisted in placing the small lantern they had at the back of Jack's neck, so that while it, as the source of the light, was completely hidden, the effect produced was as though he were walking in a mysterious kind of halo of light emanating from himself in faint rays all round him. Jack adopted, too, a solemn gliding movement, and thus slowly advanced. Now, the terrified turnkey had not left his post, but he had got another man to stay with him, and they were both sitting close together, whispering and talking quite mysteriously about all the well-authenticated ghost-stories they had ever heard in all their lives from time to time—a theme certainly not over well adapted to calm their fears. They had just got into the thick of such an ill-timed conversation, when the turnkey glanced in the direction of the passage over his comrade's head, and his eyes dilated to an enormous extent.

"What's the matter?" said the man.

"Oh! oh! oh!"

The man jumped up and looked behind him, for his back had been turned towards the passage, and there, sure enough, to his horror, he saw a figure gliding towards him, lighted by no seemingly earthly light. Indeed, to his terrified apprehension, the figure seemed to move in a strange and awful kind of luminous cloud. Terror for a few brief moments seemed to choke his utterance, as well as to freeze up all capacity to fly. He stood like one transfixed by some magic spell, and slowly on came Jack. It was by a frightful effort that the man at length uttered a shriek, and broke the fascination of the spell that bound him. He then made a rush, in which he upset his comrade, nor stopped until he had darted down a cross passage, and disappeared. As for the turnkey himself, he lay upon the floor without sense or motion. All was accomplished that fear could accomplish, and Jack turned, and beckoned to Claude, who was considerably in the rear, to come on.

"We are saved!" said Jack.

"Nay, nay," said Claude, "be not over sanguine. The walls of Newgate yet encompass us. Do not say we are saved yet."

Jack hurried forward, and to his great joy, he found as he reached them, that his ropes had not been discovered by the authorities of Newgate. If they could get into the attic from where he had come, all would now be well.

"Claude," he said, "you will be upon the road again in a few hours."

"Think you so? Where is my gallant horse? Alas, I shall miss it. Indeed!"

"You know the cottage on Barnes Common, where we have had shelter more than once, and where Cicely was concealed, by its kind owners?"

"Well, well?"

"There, then, is your horse, and it is there that I wish you to get at once, as soon as we are free of Newgate. Come on—climb, Claude, climb the rope, and I will follow you quickly."

"No, Jack, you are weak from your wounds, and I have made up my mind that you shall go first when safety is before and danger behind. It is of no use your expostulating with me, Jack."

Jack knew too well the determined character of Claude, when he spoke as he now did, to attempt to argue the point with him, so as time was precious, he ascended the rope first. They met with no obstruction, and reached the walls of the prison, opposite to Jack's window, in safety.

"Save yourself," said Jack, "I faint again. The handkerchief has fallen from the wound, and I—I bleed—I fear to death."

He fell at Claude's feet insensible.

It took Claude but one moment's thought, and then a moment's action, to remedy this disaster. Lifting Jack in his arms, he placed him upon his back, and tied his hands together round his neck, and then he launched himself upon the rope. It vibrated and creaked beneath the double weight fearfully. But the passage was short, and in the space of half a minute, Claude, with his burthen, rolled through the attic window on to the floor.

"There are the cats again," said a voice; I thought they'd come. Hist! hist! Oh drat you, I say! Hist! hist!"

Claude heard these odd sounds with some degree of alarm, for Jack had told him that the attic window was closed, and quite untenanted, except by himself. The most profound darkness was in the attic, so that he could see nothing, and the only course he could bring to bear upon the whole affair now was that of remaining silent.

"Drat the cats!" said the voice again, which was that of a female; "drat the cats, I say! Who is to get a wink of sleep, I wonder? I wish some people, when they go out, would be so good as to shut their windows."

Claude now began to have an apprehension of what was the matter, and he went to the attic door in order to try if it were really quite fast. It was so.

"So far, so good," he said. "And now, Jack, we must not remain long in this place; but all will depend upon the capacity you have to move about."

He soon lit a match, and, by its flickering glare, he saw a candle ready for lighting upon a table, and in a moment the attic was sufficiently illumined for Claude to see well about him. He carefully closed the curtain over the window, and again satisfied himself that the door was fast. Then he raised Jack from the floor, and placed him upon the bed that was in one corner. A very superficial examination of Jack's condition sufficed to let Claude see that the bandages had come off his wound, and that it had again bled freely, which, no doubt, had been the immediate cause of his fainting; but now Claude was in a better condition to apply such surgical knowledge as he possessed to Jack's case. He then dashed cold water in Jack's face, and soon had the pleasure of seeing him open his eyes, and look about him.

"Newgate?" said Jack.

"No, the attic," said Claude. "All's right."

"Oh God! can it be?"

"It is, Jack. Make yourself comfortable now, old friend. We have done what so many have tried and failed to do—escaped from Newgate, and in a manner, too, that will be remembered."

"Yes, Claude, those words that you wrote upon the wall of your cell were prophetic."

"They were. But now comes the most important question of all, Jack. Do you feel yet strong enough to move?"

"Oh, yes, yes. I am convinced the ball from Long's pistol went quite

through my shoulder, breaking no bones, for a wonder; so I shall be better. But, Claude, the safest and the best course in the world would be to leave me here."

"No, it would not, Jack, for then I should have to stay with you. By some means or other, I will get you to the cottage at Barnes. There I shall have no objection to leave you, because there I know you will be kindly treated, for your own sake as well as for mine. Now don't say a word about it, Jack. It shall be so. Can you walk?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

Jack suppressed carefully whatever feelings of pain and weakness he might have; and, assisted by Claude, he managed to descend the stairs pretty well. They met with no sort of obstruction, for, with the exception of the old woman, who had given utterance to such anathemas against the cats, there was no one but themselves stirring in the house at that hour. Claude carefully removed the fastenings from the street-door, and in another moment they both stood in the street, and felt the cool morning air blowing upon their faces. It was a grateful feeling to both of them, for, to their perceptions, although not many feet distant, the air within the prison had a very different flavor to the air without; and this was not altogether fancy.

"What's that?" said Jack, as a carriage of the most gaudy description suddenly flashed by them, and was soon lost in the dim distance at the farther end of the street.

Before Claude could make any reply, another vehicle passed, and then another.

"I can understand what this means," said Claude: "a civic entertainment has taken place, and the mirth and the feeding have been practised until this hour. The guests are returning, you see, Jack."

"That's it, no doubt," said Jack. "Ah, Claude, one of those equipages would soon take us to Barnes."

"Indeed, yes, Jack; but they would rather condescend to carry us to Newgate. But come this way, Jack. I think we are safer in a crowd and bustle, than in the lonely solitude of this place; and if we can get to the river-side by Southwark, who knows but I may get hold of a boat? I shall not be very scrupulous, Jack, in borrowing one for this occasion."

Jack leant upon Claude's arm, and they proceeded together along Newgate-street to Cheapside. As they went they met more and more evidence of the fact that the night had been devoted to a civic feast, for carriages were dashing about, and now and then, some gorgeously appalled footman with links in his hand crossed the roadway, jesting and laughing. By the time our hero got to King-street, he found that at Guildhall the entertainment had taken place. We say had, for there were unmistakeable evidences that it was breaking up.

"Sir Thomas Grampus's carriage!" roared one. "Way for the sheriff. Links, here—links. Constables! Clear the way for my Lord Mayor!"

The trampling of horses feet and the flaring of links, made up a scene of great confusion, and in the midst of it a footman laid hold of Claude by the arm, and said—"Fellow—a—a—hold them *osses eds*, a—a—while *oi* look for my *leday—oi—a—a—fellow.*"

"Certainly, sir," said Claude. "Anything else?"

A splendid carriage was close to the footway, and a pair of greys were stamping in their impatience to be gone. The coachman was refreshing the inward man at a public-house close at hand, not expecting to be wanted quite so soon, and the footman suddenly found it his duty to go and escort his lady, whoever she was, to the carriage, since, from the crowd and rush of the vehicles, the carriage, could not be brought to her. Jack looked up at the box of the carriage, and so did Claude. It was empty. The footman had darted away with a link in his hand, never doubting for a moment but that the person he had ordered so to do would mind the carriage until the fat coachman could bustle out of the public-house.

"Jack," said Claude.

"Yes. Yes."

"Get in."

"What? in—the—the carriage, do you mean, Claude? Good God! don't you think that such a step as that would be rather—too—too bold?"

"Get in."

Claude clambered up to the box and seized the reins—Jack opened the door of the carriage, and at once dashed in among the soft luxurious cushions. One touch to the impatient greys, and away they started at a smart trot down Cheapside. Claude drove as coolly as possible, and Jack lay at the bottom of the carriage, scarcely sensible in his fright of where he really was. The rapidity and daring boldness with which this action was done constituted its safety. The least appearance of timidity would have ruined all, but Claude was so self-possessed, that nobody thought of looking to see if he had livery on or not. If they had looked for that insignia of his genuineness, in a little while they would have been deceived, for there was a large great coat, with about a quire of capes, upon the box, which he stopped at the corner of Newgate-street to put on. Then off he dashed again at a rattling pace. Truly, Claude did not spare the spirited greys. He dashed down Snow-Hill, and then he began to ask himself which would be the best way to go to Barnes, for thither he determined to give the horses a trot. Hammersmith Bridge had not then been thought of, but old Battersea Bridge was there, and Claude thought that his best plan would be to drive either on to that, or cross old Westminster, and so take his way to Barnes. He trotted down the Strand while he was considering, and as he passed Northumberland-house, he was for the moment much startled by feeling a touch upon his arm. Upon starting half round, he found it was Jack, at the front window of the carriage.

"Oh, Claude, is it possible?" said Jack. "Can it really be that you have got clear off with the carriage?"

"It looks like it," said Claude.

"And it was done for my sake?"

"Not much merit in that, Jack. How much have you done for my sake? But tell me, shall we go by Westminster to Barnes, or by Battersea?"

"Westminster, Claude. You will excite less attention."

"Be it so then. Now, Jack, you sit down gently and comfortably, and don't make yourself at all uneasy. All will be well. No one will think of interfering with us now, and if they did, I think they would repent of it in a short time."

Having now determined his route, Claude put the horses to better speed, and they went on with the carriage as though it had been a child's cart behind them. The old bridge of Westminster—old then—was passed over, and the vehicle made its way into that den of houses that flank the river upon the Surrey side, where squalid poverty and brazen vice seem to be ever alike at home. Claude would have liked much to know how Jack was, but while they were in the vicinage of houses he did not like to pause and descend from the box, so he drove on until gradually the open country began to show itself. The fresh morning air brought out the fragrance of flowers, and although a chilly dew was upon all things, there was an invigorating feel in the atmosphere, which to Claude, after his incarceration in Newgate, was specially delightful. There was not the least appearance of pursuit, and indeed there can be no doubt but that, as good fortune would have it, Claude was out of sight with the useful carriage before it was missed, and its disappearance was involved in perfect mystery. We need not trace the whole of Claude's route to Barnes: suffice it that when he got within a mile of the place of his destination, he stopped the horses, and alighted.

"Jack," he said, "how are you now?"

"Much better," was the cheering response. "I have scarcely felt the fatigue of the journey at all, Claude, since we got off the stones."

"That is all right. Now, can you walk a mile, thank you?"

"Two Claude, if needs be."

"That's right. I do not wish to bring this vehicle so near to Barnes, that it shall become a sign-post to direct people where we are; so I propose leaving it close at hand here, and giving the horses their liberty. Here are plenty of fine meadows, for them to graze in, and they will enjoy themselves exceedingly. Hold fast a moment, Jack, where you are."

Claude drove the carriage into a road-side field, and then some distance along behind a tall hedge and broad ditch. He then once more alighted, and having taken the horses out, he freed them of all harness, and sent them capering away by giving each a touch with the whip. He then, by the assistance of Jack, finally upset the carriage into the ditch, where it lay, with so little of it visible, that it could not be seen from the road, and so was likely, for some time at least, to escape any observation.

"Now for our friends at Barnes!" cried Claude. "Lean upon me, Jack, and put the best foot foremost, for the daylight, you see, has already made some progress, and the sooner we now get housed the better it will be for both of us."

Scarcely had these words passed Claude's lips, when he heard the distant sound of horses' feet upon the road behind him. Some one was evidently coming on at a quick rate.

"An enemy?" said Jack, inquiringly.

"We shall soon see. Walk slow, Jack, I have the pistol you gave me all ready, but I may as well look to the priming, at all events."

Jack looked back as Claude examined the priming of his pistol; but an exclamation from Jack interrupted him.

"Good God, Claude, who do you think that is?"

"Eh?—Who?"

"Long, the officer; I know him well by sight—I should know him among a thousand. 'Tis he—'tis he, Claude; but what, in the name of all that's horrible, brought him down this road?"

"Information of some sort, you may depend, Jack. But we are one too many for him. Ah! there are three other horsemen behind him. To the hedge, Jack, to the hedge. Don't expose yourself to the officers. This way! this way!"

Claude seized Jack by the arm, and they both darted through the hedge. It would appear, however, that Long, the officer, who rode a little in advance of three men whom he had with him, had seen the fugitives, for he suddenly cried out—"Come on, and seize that man who has just crept through the hedge. Take him dead or alive. He may be our man. Quick! quick!"

These words, of dire import as they were, came plainly enough to the ears of Claude and Jack, and they now saw nothing before them but to sell their lives as dearly as possible. But Mr. Long, after coming up to within about twenty paces of the hedge, somehow or other hung back. How strange and true it is that all great talkers are cowards!

"Come on! come on!" he said to the men he had with him, "come on, my brave fellows. You shall be well rewarded, I will take care of that. Come on now, at once; don't be afraid!"

"We ain't afraid," said one of the men in a loud voice, laying an emphasis on the "we." "We ain't afraid, Mr. Long, I assure you."

Stung by this reproach, Long did approach nearer to the hedge, and taking a pistol from the holster of his saddle, he said—"By all that's sacred I will fire into the hedge if you don't come out directly, whoever you are!"

Claude Duval had in his hand the pistol that Jack had given him, and he took a careful aim at Long. He whispered to Jack—"This fellow has had one shot at us, and it is fairly my turn now."

On the instant, then, he pulled the trigger, and when the smoke cleared away, the saddle of Long's horse was empty, and that notable officer lay upon the ground, with a small hole in his forehead that was quite sufficient to let out his modicum of life. The other men rode up instantly.

"Claude," said Jack, "if you don't be still and let me have my own way now, I swear to you, by the memory of all our freindship, if you are taken, I will blow my own brains out."

"Good God! what do you mean?"

"You shall see in a moment, Claude, what I mean," said Jack. "See, there are no less than seven men on horseback!"

Sixteen-string Jack was quite right. There were now upon the spot immediately in front of the hedge, no less than seven mounted men, four more followed hard upon the track of the three who had been with Long. Resistance was madness, but yet Claude was not prepared for what Jack was really about to do.

"Promise me, Claude," said Jack.

"But——"

"Then here goes—good bye!"

Jack placed the muzzle of the pistol in his mouth, and Claude had just time to clasp his hand and say—"I promise anything, Jack."

"Good. Remain quiet here, then, Claude, and remember that you have now passed your word, which to me you never yet broke. We may meet again some day. God bless you."

Before, then, Claude could say another word, or move a finger to prevent him, Jack burst out of the hedge in front of the horsemen, and cried in a loud voice—"Further resistance is useless against so many—I give myself up."

The men had pistols in their hands, and at sight of Jack, one in his hurry fired, but the bullet went wide of its mark, and then two of the others flung themselves off their steeds, and took hold of their prisoner roughly.

"I am wounded," said Jack.

"Who are you?" cried one, "who are you? Are you Claude Duval, you vagabond?"

"I am no vagabond; I wonder that you should not see at once that I don't belong to your family; you must be a fool."

"I'll fool you," said the fellow, and he raised his hand to strike Jack, but one of his comrades interposed, saying, in an indignant voice—"For shame, Atkins—for shame! What do you mean by behaving to a man in that way? He is our prisoner. Surely seven of us are enough to take care of him without any ill-usage as well. Just you strike him, and I'll have you off your horse before you know where you are."

Atkins growled out something that was unintelligible, but he lowered his hand without striking Jack, and some of the others soon tied a cord round Jack's arms, and they looked at Long, who, if he had been looked at for an age, could not have returned the compliment.

"You have done for him," said one of the men to Jack.

"This wound in my shoulder came from his hand," replied Jack.

"Why, he did not fire."

"Not here, but he did in Newgate."

"Then you are Claude Duval! Comrades, we have recaptured Claude Duval, that the sheriff offered £200 reward for. Not a bad morning's work. Let's sling the dead body of Long across one horse, and put our prisoner on another. The sooner we now get to London the better."

"Yes," said another, "but I vote that we leave the body at the first public-house we come to. There will be an inquest on it, of course."

"Very well—come on."

Jack was placed upon a horse behind one of the officers, and to their great surprise he said, with an air of fervour that could not but be sincere, as they trotted off—"Thank God!"

"What for?" said the officer.

"No matter," replied Jack. "I am very well pleased, that's all, and so I may thank God, I suppose, and give no offence to any one?"

"Oh, none in the least, only it's very odd. Make speed, friends—all's right

who so welcome as we to-day at the gate of old Newgate, I should like to know? Ha! ha!"

Of they went, and in two minutes the clatter of their horses' hoofs had died away into but an indistinct murmur in the distance. Claude Duval rose up, and bursting through the hedge, stood in the centre of the road, shading his eyes with his hands, and trying to catch a last glance of that dear friend who for him had made so noble a sacrifice, but a turn of the road completely hid him from sight.

"Gone!" said Claude.

Then a choking sensation in his throat seemed to prevent him from uttering another word for some minutes, during which he did not move from the spot.

Suddenly, then, he dashed his hand across his eyes, and, without saying a word, started off in the direction of Barnes. He had not walked far, before he saw, some short distance to his left, a hillock, which was of sufficient height to command a view of the surrounding country for a considerable distance. Claude made a leap over a hedge, and then ran towards it. He reached its summits, and fancied he saw the horsemen who were conveying Jack to prison some miles off.

"And do you know so little of me, Jack," he soliloquised, "as to suppose that I would allow you to make this sacrifice for me, and then desert you? No—no—no! May heaven at my utmost need desert me if I do. I will save you, Jack, yet."

He slowly descended the hill, and at a rapid pace pursued his route. He had not proceeded far when he heard the neigh of a horse behind him; he thought it as well not to hurry himself, for that would excite suspicion, nor would he look round except very cautiously to see who the horseman was; but it was little he could see of him, except that he was enveloped in a large cloak, and rode a powerful looking bay horse. What was his surprise, however, to hear a voice say—"Is it indeed you, Claude Duval?"

Claude turned on the instant to make what defence he could; for the idea that, like Ishmael, the hands of all men were against him, and his hand against all men, was strong within him; and yet had he been in a calmer frame of mind, he would then have detected more melancholy in the stranger's voice than enmity.

"Ah! it is indeed you," said the stranger, and dropping the cloak from before his face, he disclosed to Claude the well-known features of Markham Brereton.

"Is this possible," said Claude, "or do I dream?"

"This is no dream," said Brereton; "and I can easily account for my presence here. I was released from Newgate, as you are probably aware, by an order from the Secretary of State, and since then I have been unwearied in my exertions to try to procure a remission of your sentence. It was all in vain; and you may judge of my joy when the rumor of your escape reached my ears two hours ago."

"But how came you upon this road?"

"I have seen Cicely, and she confided to me the fact that you had an interest somewhere in this direction; my errand is to do you what service I can. If you want money, here is my purse; if you want a horse, take this one; if you want a friend, look upon me, and only say what I can, by any possible exertions, do for you?"

"This from you?" said Claude.

"Yes; and why not?"

"I thought I had removed your anxiety by yoking your sister's fortunes to mine. I thought that you would never be able to tolerate the highway-man."

"Do not speak of that. Did you not come forward and save me from the base machinations of Tom Brereton, my own near relation, and that, too, at the imminent hazard of your own life? Can I do otherwise now than hold out my hand to you in true friendship and call you brother?"

Claude clasped the extended hand of Markham. "I—I—only wish," he said, much affected, "I only wish I were not what I am. But it is now a vain regret."

"Not wholly."

"What mean you? I have gone too far in my present career ever to embrace another."

"Nay, in some other land you may be blessed by peace. I have means—how I came by them will be the subject of another conversation with you. But why will you not leave England with Cicely and me, and in some other country go by a different name from that which you have here?"

"If I could."

"You surely can. The coast may be easily gained; I have a friend at Southampton who will give you a shelter, if you can get there, until Cicely and I join you, and from that port nothing will be more easy than to get to the continent. Only say that you will attempt it, and I shall be happier than I have been for many a long day."

"Listen to me," said Claude. "I have a story to tell you, and then you will be better able to judge of the value of the advice you give me. Just listen to the story of my escape, and then tell me what you would do."

Markham Brereton was profoundly silent while Claude, having one arm upon the saddle of his steed, related to him all the various particulars of his escape from Newgate, by the aid of Jack, and the subsequent conduct of Jack when he was upon the verge of a second captivity.

"Now," he said, "ought I to desert Sixteen-string Jack?"

"No," said Markham Brereton, "it would be base."

"I knew you would say that. It would be base indeed. So, you see, I am yet doomed to remain and fulfil my destiny here in England. If Jack can be rescued from his present position and taken with us, I will gladly embrace your proposition, but I cannot go without him. The ties that bind me to him are by far too strong for any feelings of self-advantage to break asunder."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

"At the cottage at Barnes, to which I am now bound, I shall find ample means of disguising myself, and when I have done so, I shall proceed to London to see what can be done for Jack. I hope for the best, and fear the worst."

"Shall I accompany you?"

"No. Do not; that would be an ill-judged step. Your being with me might provoke suspicion, but by myself I shall get on very well. Go home again, and if you remain with Cicely, and she is where I left her, expect me in the course of a few hours."

"I will. I have that abundant faith in your tact and your resources, that what you dictate as best to be done, under such circumstances as the present, I am inclined to believe is the best. Come to us as soon as you can, and we will see what can be done."

"Depend upon me," said Claude. "I don't think I shall have any real difficulty now. The only party, as you find, who had taken this road after me, is disposed of. I may be in London sooner than you expect. Remember me to Cicely, and think of me as kindly as you can yourself."

Claude waved his hand, and giving one of his fascinating smiles to Markham, he walked rapidly on.

"Alas!" said Markham Brereton, as he turned his horse's head towards London, "what might not that man have been under different circumstances? How truly are we the slaves of past actions. Claude Duval will go down to posterity as a robber, while men who are far worse robbers than he would ever dream of being, are venerated as bishops, or respected as ministers of state."

Markham Brereton was quite right. Truly, some great day is wanted, upon which folks will find their level, and if such a day should ever really dawn,

how many a piece of gilt iniquity will shrink into the nothingness of its natural individuality! We shall see—perhaps!

* * * * *

It was about two o'clock upon that day, that Markham Brereton and Cicely were sitting together in a small, but comfortable room, when the servant of the house came, and said—"If you please, sir, a Mr. Lee wants to see you."

"Mr. Lee?"

A tallish, slim, gentlemanly-looking man, with light hair and a sandy moustache, scrupulously dressed, entered the room, and in a slightly foreign accent, but very indifferent English, said—"May I have the honor of seeing Mr. Brereton?"

"Yes, sir, my name is Brereton."

Both Cicely and Markham were rather surprised at the stranger's manners. He walked to the door, which had been closed by the servant, and opening it a short distance, he listened attentively; then closing it again, he advanced and said—"Is it possible that my disguise is so perfect, than even you do not know me, Cicely?"

"Claude, Claude!" she cried, "it is our own Claude!"

"Hush! hush! Walls have ears. Hush, dear one, be calm—the slightest hint of who I am might be fatal. Ah, Cicely, at times I doubted if I should ever have the joy again of seeing you, but now to hold you in my arms is a rich recompense for all I have suffered." Cicely hung on his bosom weeping; but she felt the necessity there was for composure, and managed to put on a calmness she was far from feeling. Markham congratulated Claude upon the admirable manner in which he had disguised himself, and then Claude asked for May.

"She is from home," replied Cicely, "but will soon be here. Oh, Claude, you will stay with us now. Say you will, and you will likewise do what Markham has advised you about leaving England. Say you will."

"When Jack is safe and free to go with us, Cicely, then speak to me of such a plan with a certainty of receiving my hearty concurrence with it."

"Is there any news of Jack, Mr. Brereton?"

"None whatever."

"What, have they not yet brought him to town?"

"Not that I know of. I have made the most careful inquiries, and heard nothing of him. It is to me quite inexplicable; I cannot make it out, and, indeed, I can come but to one conclusion, which is, that something serious has happened upon the road."

"Then I must go," said Claude, as he rose; "I must go and ascertain what it is. I do not think that Jack, in his disabled condition, could make, with any degree of success, an attempt to escape; and if he really has got away, it is by some accident, such as might not happen once in a hundred years; nevertheless I must enquire."

"Oh, Claude, do not go into danger," said Cicely.

"Danger! Is not the very atmosphere I breathe full of danger to me? Am I not surrounded by dangers in every shape and way? Who shall say that by going east, west, north, or south, I run into the most dangers? No, Cicely, do not fancy that I am running a greater risk by going to see after the fate of Jack than by staying here. I will return as soon as possible, you may depend. My horse is at a friend's house."

"Be careful; return you must, Claude."

"Oh, I can trust the 'family,' as we call them; all is right upon that score; and mind, if anything happen to me, always make inquiries of Joe, at the 'Saddle Bags,' in Picket Street until the first of the next month. Once a month I change my confidence."

"Your life is a strange one," said Markham.

"It is, indeed, one made up of all strange chances; but all must end somewhere. Farewell, Cicely; you need not weep, for you will see me again, I think, before the hour of midnight. Adieu!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WE return to Sixteen-string Jack. The wound in his shoulder was really much more serious than Jack would even admit to Claude. The pistol bullet had not, as Jack had supposed, made itself a passage and escaped. On the contrary, it still rankled in the wound. Moreover, if any set of circumstances more than another could have tended to the aggravation of the wound, it would be the mental and physical exertions which Jack had gone through since the time of receiving the hurt. A certain feeling that if he gave way he should become a serious encumbrance to Claude, had hitherto kept him up. It is truly astonishing how mind will triumph over matter; but now that he was in the hands of the officers—and, oh! joy of joys to him!—now that he had fairly succeeded in giving Claude another, and a fairer chance than ever of escape—Jack no longer felt the same necessity that he had before felt for battling against his own sensations. A faintness came over him, and a perceptible shudder passed across his limbs.

“What’s the matter?” said the officer on whose horse he was.

Jack could not answer. The world seemed to be slipping from him, and then all consciousness was gone.

“Holloa! stop, stop!” said the officer to his comrades.

“What is it now?”

“I do believe he is dead.”

“Dead?” they all cried; “oh no, not that. Who knows but there might be some cavil about the reward if he were dead?”

“I can’t help it. All I can say is, that he don’t seem to have any life in him.”

Certainly Jack’s appearance warranted the alarm of the officer; and when the others gathered round and looked at their prisoner, they fully shared in their comrade’s alarm.

“Confound him,” said one, “that’s just like his obstinacy, now; I thought we should not get him to London quite so easy as we might have wished. What is to be done now?”

“There’s the Rose Inn, about half a mile further on, close to the common,” said one; “and what is to hinder us leaving Long’s dead body there, and likewise waiting a little for the recovery of our prisoner? I must say it will be but half a triumph to carry a dead Claude Duval to Newgate instead of a living one.”

This seemed to them all to be good and judicious advice, so they made up their minds to follow it forthwith, and putting their horses to a canter, they soon traversed the half mile, although it was somewhat of a long one, that lay between them and the Old Rose Inn. The arrival of seven men on horseback, a dead body, and a fainting prisoner, with his dress and person sprinkled with blood, produced rather a sort of sensation at the inn. The landlord looked, indeed, as though, of the two, he would rather have not had the honor of the visit; but with a laudable fear of the licensing magistrate before his eyes, he did not exactly like to say anything that could be construed into an anti-welcome.

“Dear me—dear me!” he said. “What’s amiss? Who have you got, gentlemen? for I see that you are officers.”

“Claude Duval,” said one.

At the mere enunciation of this well-known name, the greatest interest was at once excited in the inn. There was not a person there that did not press forward to obtain a sight of one who had made so much noise on the road; and among them all there was only one rough-looking farmer, who shook his head as he looked at Jack, and said—“Be sure this be your mon?”

“Yes, wiseacre,” said one of the officers. “We are sure, though none of us have seen Claude Duval before, except Long, and he is shot.”

"Well," said the farmer, "I have seen Claude Duval before; and much good may your prisoner do you, that's all. Ho! ho! ho!"

"Pho! we are satisfied. You mind your own business. Now, landlord, you must have this dead body laid somewhere, for there will be an inquest at this house. It's Mr. Long, the officer; Claude Duval has done for him, and we want a bed and doctor for Claude himself; for, to tell the truth, we want to get him to Newgate alive and kicking, and you see what a state he is in."

"Why, he's a dead 'un, too," said the landlord.

"Not a bit of it. He's only done up, that's all, and has got a wound, you see, in his shoulder. That's it—all right—up stairs, is it? Very well—gently—gently. Is there a doctor near at hand? That will do—let your boy run for him at once."

Jack was laid upon a bed, and the nearest medical man was sent for, pending whose coming the officers enjoyed themselves with a draught of old ale, and told their story at the bar of how, with extraordinary valor, they had captured Claude Duval, and fully expected the sheriff's reward for so doing. They did not forget to make the most of their adventure; and when the nearest surgeon arrived, two of them accompanied him up stairs to the room in which Jack, insensible as he was, had been securely locked. They found him still in the same state, and the surgeon, who was a skilful man enough in his profession, extracted the pistol bullet from the wound in Jack's shoulder, and bandaged it properly up before he would take any means to recover him from the state of syncope into which, from pain and exhaustion, he had fallen.

"There is no occasion to arouse him," he said, "until I have done all that is necessary for him; but now that is over, we will hear what he has got to say."

By the application of some pungent essences, Jack was soon recovered, and looked about with rather a puzzled expression; but he recovered his consciousness of what had happened much sooner than any one would have imagined, and when one of the officers said—"Well, Claude Duval, how are you now?"

He smiled faintly, and just murmured—"All's right—all's right."

Truly it was great pleasure to find that they still continued in this mistake, for he knew that each minute that was gained was of the most vital importance to Claude.

"He seems pleased enough," said the doctor; "but if he be moved for some hours, there is every chance of his wound inflaming to a sufficient extent to endanger his life. I suppose, though, that really don't much matter, for he will be hanged if he be taken to Newgate, I presume?"

"Yes," said one of the officers, "but it does matter. We want to get him to Newgate alive; so we will wait—at least a couple of us will, until he is a little better, while our comrades can ride on, and take the news of the capture, putting in our joint claim for the reward."

"As you please," said the medical man. "If you don't remove him, I shall see him again in a few hours, when I shall be better able to judge of his condition."

Jack overheard this discourse, and he closed his eyes, trying to think what would be the best policy for him to adopt under all the circumstances of the case. He was resolved to keep up, as long as he could, the delusion that he was Claude Duval; and at the same time, he was better pleased to be at the Rose Inn than in Newgate. He had a hope that Claude's fertile brain would devise something in his favor? We rather think that at the bottom of his heart he really had. Who can wonder at the wondrous faith Jack had in the resources as well as in the courage of Claude? The officers carried out their expected determination, and only two of them remained at the inn, to keep charge of their prisoner. They considered that the condition he was in afforded a fair enough warranty that he would make no sort of attempt to escape. Quietness surely must be to him the greatest of earthly blessings now. Under these circumstances, it was no wonder that the officers made themselves quite

comfortable, and by no means disturbed themselves about their prisoner, whom they thought so very safe in more ways than one.

"There will be a pretty good purse for us all."

"To be sure," replied the other; "and it's a lucky job that Long got that pistol-shot."

"So it is."

"You may say that, for if he hadn't, I know as well as possible he would have tried on taking the whole of the reward himself, and only handing us a few guineas for ourselves."

"Not a doubt of it; but there he lies up stairs stiff enough. Come, it's about dinner time now. Let's have something nice now."

It was about half-past two o'clock now that a man in a respectable groom's livery rode up to the Rose Inn, and said—"Hilloa! Have you room for my master for a few hours, landlord?"

"Ay," said the landlord, "and for a dozen masters, if you had them, old fellow. Who is he, I should like to know, that he's so afraid of not getting room at the Rose Inn, he's forced to send you on afore?"

"He's a Frenchman, and his name is Monsieur Resolut; but, he is a good master for all that, and he pays his way like a trump. You know he can't help being a Frenchman."

"Oh, no—no, certainly not. We oughtn't to think ill of a man 'cos 'o things he can't help, no how. Frenchman or not, if he's a gentleman, and behaves himself as sich, he's welcome as the flowers in May to the Old Rose Inn."

It was Claude himself, in the same costume that had so successfully deceived even May and Markham, who now rode up to the door, where one of the very officers who would almost have given his ears to capture him, was lounging with a pipe in his mouth. But Claude felt that he was perfectly safe.

"If they take Jack for me," he said to himself, "they don't know me, that's quite clear."

The officer looked at Claude as carelessly as a man who can have no possible interest in another might be supposed to look; and as Claude dismounted, the only remark that was made was by the landlord, who said—"He ain't a bad-looking fellow, though he is a Frenchman."

"Quite the reverse," said the barmaid.

"Anything, but—" said the landlady.

"Quite a love," said the landlady's niece, a young lady of about fifteen, who was very romantic; but she did not give utterance to her opinion aloud.

Claude was shown up stairs; and as they were opening a room door for him, he laid his hand upon the lock of another.

"Not there, sir," said the landlord; "there's a prisoner there—the notorious Claude Duval."

"Indeed," said Claude, with a well-imitated foreign accent, "I shall not for to go there."

"No, you shall for to go here," said the landlord, who had the common notion that a Frenchman understands bad English better than good; "Claude Duval is a highwayman, and he has shot an officer, the dead body of whom is in yon further room."

"I not understand too much," said Claude.

"Oh, bother him," muttered the landlord, "I dare say, a stupid like he don't know one half what one says to him. Who would be a Frenchman if he possibly could help it?"

The door was closed upon Claude, and then he stood profoundly still, in an attitude of listening: all was still as the grave upon that floor; and after a few minutes of the most intense listening, Claude opened the door and stepped out into the corridor, from which several doors opened, both to the right and to the left. To have a thorough idea of the plan of the premises was now Claude's great object, and he stepped lightly across the corridor and tapped at a door opposite. There was no reply, so he concluded the room was empty. Upon

opening the door he found he was right. It was a bedroom leading into the stable-yard, beyond which yard was the open country. He saw his horse in the yard undergoing a slight grooming from a lad, while the servant he (Claude) had brought with him, was leaning upon a gate opening into the meadows at the back of the stables. All these things Claude noted accurately, and likewise saw that the descent from the window of the room in which he was, to the yard, would be a matter of no difficulty whatever. Quick in motion and fertile in resources, Claude at once made up his mind as to what was to be attempted, and he retired to his room again, resolved upon at once commencing operations, for he was terribly afraid Jack might be hastily removed from the inn. Claude rang the bell, and was calmly reading a newspaper that had lain upon the table, when the landlady's niece, who was upon the romantic side of twenty, made her appearance in answer to the summons. Claude felt, from the first moment that he looked at this girl, a strange desire to trust her, but still it was rather too hazardous a thing to do so all at once, and he looked at her in silence for a few moments. What was his surprise when she cautiously closed the door, and with much agitation of manner said—"Sir, I know you."

Claude started for the moment, and a flush of color visited his cheeks at the thought of the possibility of all he was trying to do for Jack being defeated, when it was most promising of success; he did not, however, lose his presence of mind.

"Do you, indeed, know me?" he said. "If so, you will have no objection to name me."

"You are Claude Duval. Pray do not be alarmed; I owe you a favor, and will repay it if I can. When the wounded man, who lies in the next chamber, was brought here, they told me it was Claude Duval. I knew they had made a mistake, and I said so, but he looked reproachfully at me and said, 'Indeed I am; from which I guessed the truth, assured that he was making a sacrifice for you.'"

"Then you will not betray me?"

"Betray you?"

"Pardon me for using the word; I *am* Claude Duval, and my errand here is, at the risk of my life, if needs be, to rescue my wounded friend. But how came you to know me?"

"By your voice. You once stopped the Exeter mail. I and my mother were passengers, and we had about us our little all (£20). I told you it would make us destitute to take it, and you said but two words—'God forbid! Can I be otherwise than grateful to you? Oh, no, you have but to command me, and I will do you any service. My poor mother is dead, and that £20 smoothed her passage to the grave.'"

Claude was much affected at the simple and earnest gratitude of this girl—a gratitude, too, that he felt his claim to was very doubtful indeed. Nevertheless, at that time he was glad to take the advantage of any circumstance that promised him aid in the deliverance of Sixteen-string Jack from the officers.

"I see but one man in the yard," said Claude, "and all I want you to do is, if you can, to keep him out of it for ten minutes, and to let me know when those ten minutes begin, and when they will be likely to happen."

"Can I do nothing else?"

"Nothing but hold me as well in your esteem as your better feelings for such as I am will let you; believe me, I shall not forget to my dying day the kindness you show."

"You must wait until five o'clock," she said, "and then our man Sam will come into his tea, which I can make take him half an hour. During that time the yard will be quite free. Besides, if you wish it, I will manage to hold both of the officers in talk at tea for as long. I don't think they will refuse an invitation from me."

"A thousand thanks."

"Not at all; you don't know how happy it makes me to show that while I always try to forget an injury, I never forget a word of kindness, and how much more than a word yours was."

Claude, we must confess it, kissed the fair cheek of the blooming Kate—yes he did, and Kate, too, was her name, and we cannot at all blame Claude for doing so—do you, gentle reader, or otherwise, as the case may be? Ah, no! Kate blushed her exit.

"This is a godsend," said Claude to himself. "I shall save you now, Jack; and I shall begin to think that even a negative good action in this world does not go without its due reward in the fullness of time. But now for a visit to you, Jack, if it be safely practicable, for I must risk as little as possible."

Claude listened for a few moments, and found that the coast was clear, after which, stepping lightly along, he reached Jack's chamber, and opening the door, he glided in instantly. Claude's first glance around the apartment showed him a cupboard, and before approaching the bed, he glanced into it and saw that it was large enough to hold him. He then walked up to the bed, and saw that Jack's eyes were closed. His old friend was either really slumbering, or thought proper to sham that state for the purpose of avoiding any conversation with the officers or the surgeon. He little expected who was now bending over him.

"Jack," said Claude, "be quiet."

Jack started, and sprung up in the bed.

"Hush—hush—'tis I —"

"Claude—Claude—oh, why are you here? Will you render all that I have done in vain? Oh, Claude, for the first time I am sorry to look upon your face."

"Nonsense, Jack. Attend to me. Are you well enough to ride?"

"Quite—but —"

"Hush, listen to me. Be too bad to move from here—rave a little—anything to induce them to keep you here yet awhile, and expect aid from me. All will be right. God bless you, Jack. Did you think I would desert you? Ah, Jack—Jack!"

Claude moved towards the door, and as he did so he heard a step in the corridor, and a loud voice from below cried—"You will find the door unlocked, doctor. We ain't afeard of him now. If he moves off, it will be out of the world."

"D—n it," said Claude, and in an instant he was in the cupboard.

The surgeon stood by Jack's bedside. Jack shut his eyes fast and tried to compose himself. The sudden appearance of Claude had much agitated him, but he recollected the advice that had been given to him by his old friend, to seem much worse than he really was, and even to sham being delirious to some extent, the better to impose upon the surgeon and his captors.

"Well, my man, how are you?"

Medical men are exceedingly fond of using the words "my man," to what they consider to be their *un*-equals.

"There he goes," said Jack, feigning delirium; "spread his brains on a brickbat and give them to a mad cat to eat."

"What, what do you say, man?"

"Here we are in the gutter—now—now—wash out the stains—where's the pitchfork?—Shake hands with a toad, and measure the distance between Tyburn Gate and the devil with his finger nails. There they go—whoop! whoop! off and away."

"Quite delirious," said the surgeon, lifting up his hands; "I must confess I did not expect this exactly; what odd things he says, too."

Jack gave such an awful groan, that the surgeon quite started back; and then affecting suddenly to fall into a deep sleep, Jack was profoundly quiet again. The surgeon was a little puzzled. He rubbed his chin with one hand, and conceiving himself to be quite alone, he said—



"I hardly know what to do with this case. I certainly expected some amount of fever, but not this delirium. And of what a novel character, too. What awful reminiscences must this wretched man have upon his mind! I wish I could recollect what he said exactly. Something about a mad cat, I think. How sound he seems to sleep now. It's rather a curious case; and the best thing I can do is to keep it as long as possible. I'll tell the officers that he ought not to be removed, unless they wish him to breathe his last before they get him to the door of Newgate. That will stop them I dare say."

The surgeon, to Jack's and Claude's great relief, stepped lightly from the room, and closing the door again, he made his way down stairs. When he was thoroughly out of hearing, Claude emerged from the cupboard, and spoke again to Jack, saying—

"Expect me at dusk, Jack, and until then keep up your spirits, my old friend. All will be well; for believe me, I have one of those presentiments that don't ever fail me that neither your time nor mine has come yet. All will be right; but don't over-act your part, if they should visit you again."

"No, Claude, no, I will not; but I implore you to consider your own safety

as paramount. From what you say, I suppose I have over-acted my part a little?"

"Why, I confess, Jack, the mad cat took me a little by surprise; but it is of no consequence. I am glad to see that smile upon your face. Farewell, Jack, for a short time. I hope to see you in safety before another day dawns; and I will, or my name is not Claude Duval."

Claude did not wait for a reply; the danger to them both of staying where he was he felt to be imminent, and he at once sought his own room, there to wait until the young girl who had promised him assistance should come to him to say that the time for action had arrived. Not the shadow of a doubt of her good faith crossed his mind, and indeed if it had it would have been to her the most cruel injustice. As he paced the room, Claude's thoughts were busily occupied with the past and the present; and for the first time since he had embraced his present hazardous and adventurous course of life, he took a keen retrospective glance at his life. He saw himself a young lad upon Hampstead Heath, with his sister May by his side; and there came before him vividly in his mind's eye the gibbet upon which hung all that remained of what he had once called father. Then came the act of retribution which will be found detailed in "Gentleman Jack;" and he remembered the cry with which Sir Lionel Faversham had fallen down the precipice upon that awful night. Then came his meeting with Sixteen-string Jack, and the various scenes that followed; and as he recollected what Jack was when he first saw him, and contrasted his bold slashing bearing then with what he was now, he could not but sigh to think how such a spirit had been broken. And thus the time passed on, until the dim shades of early twilight began to creep over the scene, and then Claude stepped into the corridor and listened.

All was still. The inn clock struck five, and he began to get uneasy, when he heard a light, hurried footstep upon the stairs, and at once he returned to his room again. He expected it was Kate; but then it might not be her, and caution was necessary. It was Kate. She entered the room with her face flushed, and her bosom heaving with agitation. It was some few moments before she could speak—and then her voice was broken and tearful.

"I have done what you wished," she said. "No one is now in the stable-yard. God speed you, Claude Duval; we may never meet again; but when you think of me, tell yourself that I tried to be grateful. The officers will be engaged for the next half hour. Farewell."

"I shall never forget you, Kate."

She held out her hand to him, and he shook it cordially. He was about to speak to her again, but she vanished from the room, and as she went she seemed to take with her the small portion of daylight that had yet lingered in the western sky. Claude started from a sort of reverie that had stole over him, and walked to the door of his room. From thence he proceeded to the head of the stairs, and listened. He heard loud laughter below, and doubted not but that the officers were making themselves as comfortable as possible, and flattering themselves they stood high in the graces of the pretty Kate. The time for action had arrived. Now, Claude was thoroughly determined to carry out this affair to the rescue of Sixteen-string Jack at any risk; and, with a full perception of all the possible dangers and difficulties that might beset him, he commenced operations. He looked carefully to the priming of his pistols, and feeling confident that the two pair he had with him were effective he sallied out of the room, exclaiming—"Now, Jack, for liberty or death!"

One of the great secrets of Claude Duval's success in many of his daring exploits consisted in the cool rapidity of his proceedings. When once he commenced an enterprise, he went on with it without flinching, and often had it completed within the time that many other persons would have been looking and peeping about to see if the coast was clear for action.

Then, again, he made his arrangements so perfectly beforehand, that, unless some very cross accident happened, nothing went amiss, and nothing was left to be decided upon at a time when it ought to be done. Claude's first care

was to let Jack know that the time for action had come; and with a light, noiseless step, he again sought the room where his comrade lay.

"Up—up, Jack, and be ready," he said, "there is no time for delays; I will be with you again in a few moments."

Jack would have said something in the shape of renewed caution or exhortation to Claude to be careful of himself, but the latter was gone as noiselessly as he had come. Three strides brought Claude to the spare bed-room opposite to Jack's apartment. He opened the window—hung an instant from the balcony—and then dropped safely into the yard, upon a quantity of hay that was there. There yet lingered sufficient of the day to guide him, without difficulty, to the stables where his mare was put up. He then blew a whistle, but so faintly that it more resembled the call of some bird to its mate than anything else. In a moment the man who played the part of his servant, made his appearance, from where Claude himself could hardly, in the twilight, discern; but there he was.

CHAPTER XL.

BOTH master and man looked at each other intently, for fear of a mistake, and then Claude said—"It's you, Bill? All's right."

"What's the fakement?" said Bill. Is the iron all hot, captain? Blaze away!"

"Hush! all's right. Get the horse all ready for a start, and open yon gate leading to the meadows. Jack is in no state to ride a steeple chase, although he will be on the back of one who could do it."

"Yes, captain, she can go it: kick out the man in the moon's eye, and then away like a handful of squibs. Blaze away!"

Claude immediately went back to the window from which he had dropped into the yard, but he found it was too much of a spring up to reach the little balcony, and looking to the stable where Bill was putting the saddle on his horse, he said—"I must have her to reach the window with. Come along, lass."

The creature knew Claude's voice in a moment, and gave a short neigh of congratulation at finding herself with him again. He led her beneath the window, and then, with great agility, mounting and standing on her back he easily got into the spare bed-room again. Leaving Bill there to finish accoutring the horse, he made his way again noiselessly and swiftly to Jack's chamber. He had no sooner reached it than he heard some one, mounted, gallop up to the door of the inn.

"I'm ready," said Jack.

"Hush! let me hear who this is that has just arrived. We ought to know as much as we can in our present circumstances, Jack, of everybody who comes here just now. Hush—hush! just for a moment, Jack—only for a moment."

Claude went close to the window and heard the following but significant colloquy—

"Hilloa!" cried a loud voice. "Is this the Rose Inn?"

"You are right for once," said some one, in a bantering tone from the inn door. "It is the Rose."

"Come—come," said the stranger, "don't trifle with me: I have ridden hard from Mr. Gregson's, the sheriff, in Ludgate, and know all about Claude Duval. Is this the house where he is in custody of the officers?"

"Yes," replied he who had before conversed. "This is the house. But don't you know that Claude Duval is sorely wounded, and can't be moved?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Gregson has heard about that—tell somebody to take care of my horse, will you—as I was saying, Mr. Gregson has heard all about that, for they sent for him to Newgate as soon as the express of Claude's capture

came in, and he says that he'll have him in Newgate to-night, wounded or not wounded, for he knows he has as many twists and doubles as an old fox, and he shan't be content until he's under lock and key."

Claude did not wait to hear more. He knew now that nothing but promptitude could save Jack; but as he turned from the window, he could not help hearing the new arrival add—

"The sheriff sent me, you see, because I know Duval well by sight."

"The deuce you do," thought Claude, and then turning to Jack, he said--
"Are you ready?"

"Quite—quite. But Claude——"

"Come—come, this is no time for exceptions. This way, Jack; I can tell you what we are to do as we go along. When you are once mounted, and in the open air, mind, you are to keep the remains of what sun-set you will see for this half hour yet on your right hand. You understand me, Jack?"

"Yes, Claude, I do. But——"

"There you are again, Jack, with your buts. Now attend to me. Come along, this way; you see I know the old Rose Inn pretty well. Push on to Battersea Fields as hard as you can, and get to Westminster. Then make your way direct to the Old Moon in Drury Lane. Anthony has ways and means of taking care of you, which he will do for your own sake as well as for mine; and upon no account stir out, for so sure as you do, you will get into mischief. Leave me entirely to my own resources. Promise me that, Jack?"

"Well—well, Claude, I suppose I must."

"That will do. You know Bill Deerhurst, old Anthony, of the Moon's, nephew?"

"Yes—yes. Well?"

"He is in the stable-yard. He will assist you to mount, and show you the way into the fields; and good luck attend you. Don't stop another moment—I won't hear one word."

"But, Claude——"

"There, that will do. Bill?"

"Here yer is!" said Bill, from below the balcony, on to which Claude had hurried Jack. "Here yer is, my masters. Blaze away! righ-too-looral loo! Kim up."

Claude now gave an illustration of that amazing strength which upon emergencies he could put forth, for he lifted Sixteen-string Jack fairly off his feet, and over the balcony into the yard, where Bill received him, and got him safely to the ground.

"Mount, and away," said Claude, "mount, Jack, and away, if you love me!"

Claude closed the window. But he lingered in the room a moment, until he heard the clatter and dash of a horse's feet, and through the glass he saw the dusky figure of the gallant steed and its rider dash away into the night air, among the meadows at the back of the old Rose Inn.

"It's done!" said Claude. "It's done, thank God. If Jack manages affairs with common prudence only, now he is free. Oh, what a load this is off my mind, to be sure; I can now really breathe a little freely."

Claude knew now that his own situation was one of immediate peril. He was there among foes without hope, and the man who had so recently come from London, had declared that he was sent purposely on account of being so well acquainted with Claude's person; so that from his scrutiny he had everything to dread, notwithstanding the perfection of his disguise. As he was traversing the corridor a thought struck him, the carrying out of which was more of a boyish whim than anything else. He proceeded to the room opening from the same corridor in which the dead body of Long the officer was; and striding up to the bed upon which it lay muffled in a sheet, he took it in

his arms, and carrying it to the bed so recently vacated by Jack, he placed therein the dead officer, and covered him up with the clothes.

"Now, gentlemen, below," said Claude, "I think I have given you the means of enjoying a little surprise when you do come up stairs."

When he reached his own room he rang the bell. Kate answered the summons—she was pale and anxious.

"Is he gone?" she said.

"Yes," replied Claude, "all is right, thanks to you. Say that I ordered coffee as soon as possible, and that I want to go to town in half an hour; and order my horse, mind, Kate. Sooner or later its absence must be discovered, and it may as well be so as soon as possible."

"Yes—yes. Oh, how I tremble."

"For what?" said Claude, with a smile.

"For your safety; a man has arrived with an order from one of the sheriffs of London to bring you up to town directly and lodge you in Newgate."

"Not me. You forget, Kate, that I am Monsieur Resolut, and that the order relates to the occupant of the adjoining room. I am quite safe so long as my disguise lasts me, and perhaps even after that. But do not create suspicion by remaining here, Kate."

Kate was rather surprised and alarmed at the curious movements of Claude. He was evidently slowly walking round her so as to get between her and the door of the room, but before she could say a word upon the subject he suddenly flung the door open, and a waiter of the inn fell into the room upon his face and hands.

"Lost—lost!" said Kate.

"Not at all," said Claude. "I heard this fellow outside. Thus we are safe enough."

"Help—mur—oh," said the waiter, who felt the cold muzzle of a pistol against his temple, and heard the click of the lock as it was put upon full cock. His hair visibly moved upon his head, and his features assumed a pallid hue.

"Spy!" said Claude, "fool as well as knave. What made you set your life upon such a cast as this? Answer me. Who am I?"

The fellow's teeth chattered so much with fear that he could not speak a word.

"Hark you," said Claude, "for the next hour you must take up your abode in yon cupboard; and as I am a living man, if you speak or move, or so much as breathe heavily, I will send a brace of bullets through the panelling: and when I am gone from here if you say one word to anybody of what you have heard, or even so much as hint anything to the disparagement of Kate, I will seek you out if you should be hidden in the pulpit of a church, and blow your brains out."

"Oh—oh—oh, gracious goodness!"

"To the cupboard."

"Oh, don't; it won't hold me. The shelf will cut me in two, and I can't cram myself in underneath. Have mercy upon me, and let me, go; I won't say anything, indeed I won't."

Claude seized him by the collar, and thrust him underneath the shelf of the cupboard; then violently closing the door, he forced the unfortunate wretch into such a narrow compass that he must have been awfully cramped—but it was better than killing him.

"The key," said Claude. "The key."

"Here," said Kate. "The room door—key locks it."

"Thanks. I warrant myself, now, against this rascal's interference, and I think his abject cowardice will save you, my dear Kate, from any annoyance from him when you release him, which you can do when you like, after I am gone."

"Oh, would that you were gone."

"Do not fear, Kate. We are not all lost who are in danger. Go and order

the coffee and the horse for me. I must now be guided entirely by circumstances."

Kate was nearly in tears as she descended the staircase; but before she had got halfway down, a grand bustle of people ascending occupied all her attention. This awakened the liveliest fears of Kate for the safety of Claude, and she flew back to his room to warn him, but she met him upon the threshold.

"Hush!" he said, "go rapidly down stairs. Say nothing, and know nothing. Leave all to me."

Kate disappeared again down the stairs, and Claude, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote upon it the words, "Bill, saddle any two horses you can find, and be at the gate leading to the meadows." Claude hoped to get the opportunity of delivering this to the man whom he had brought with him, and whom he knew was courageous enough for anything. He would have made his way into the spare bed-room again, from whence Jack had escaped, and trusted to finding Bill within the stable-yard; but he heard those who were upon the stairs too close at hand. By the sound of feet, he was sure there were four or five persons; and as they reached the head of the stairs, he heard one say—

"It's the sheriff's express orders, so, come what may of it, nobody's to blame. He must be taken to town and he must be bad, indeed, if a post-chaise will hurt him. You have seen the sheriff's orders, so come on."

"Very well," said one of the officers.

Claude was now perfectly aware that an *eclaircissement* would take place very shortly; and he was not a little curious to know how the surprise that was in store for the sheriff's man and the two officers at the inn, would be taken by them. As the party passed his door, he heard some one say—
"Who is in that room?"

And then the voice of Bill replied—"Why, my master, Monsieur Resolut, is there. He's a Frenchman; but of all things, I should like to see Claude Duval. He robbed my master once, near Winchester."

Bill accompanied this speech by a sly kick against Claude's door, and the whole party passed on to the room, where they fully—with the exception of Bill, who knew so much better—expected to find their prisoner. It was quite dark enough for lights, and the landlord, who was likewise upon the spot, carried a lighted candle in his hand. Claude would have given anything for an opportunity of slipping the little memorandum he had written, respecting the horses into the hands of Bill; but just then it could not be done. He did not despair however, of very shortly finding a means of doing that much, and he kept close to the door of his room, holding the handle of the lock, so as to be ready to turn it at a moment's notice.

"This is the room," said one of the officers, opening the door of the chamber that had been Sixteen-string Jack's temporary prison. "Here he is."

They all went in, and Claude at once opened his door and looked out. A glance showed him that Bill lingered behind the others. Rapidly traversing the few steps between the two doors, Claude placed in Bill's hand the little missive he had written, and was back again like a flash of light. Bill's head was in the room, so that no one there could say he was for a moment absent; but his hand was without, and it closed upon the little despatch in an instant. He expected fully something of the sort from Claude.

"Yes," said one of the officers approaching the bed, "here he is safe; but not sound. Ha!—ha! Oh! He's dead!"

"Dead?" cried the sheriff's messenger. "You don't say so! Dead?"

"As mutton!"

They all crowded round the bed, and the officers pulled from over the face of the corpse the sheet which Claude had laid over it, adding—"Well, you may take him to London now and welcome. There he is. He won't run away any more, I'll be bound."

"You idiots!" said the sheriff's messenger. "You incorrigible geese! Why, you have killed the wrong man—that's no more Claude Duval than I am."

"Not Claude Duval?"

"No—not at all like him."

The officer looked earnestly at the corpse, and then he cried—"May I die this instant, if that is the man we brought here wounded."

"Look at him," cried the other. "Why, Jarvis, don't you know that face? It's poor Long, that Claude Duval shot. There's the scar on his nose. Don't you know him?"

They all looked thunderstricken, except the sheriff's man, and he calmly enough put his hands in his pockets, and whistled a tune.

"Ha! ha!" he then said. "It's all right—oh, of course; I knew it was no go. I took the liberty of saying as much to the sheriff. I could have sworn it would have turned out something extraordinary. Oh, dear me; you don't know Claude Duval so well as I do. He ain't to be nabbed, or kept when he is nabbed, quite so easy. Oh, dear, no! So it's all ended in a bottle of smoke."

"But we had him!" cried one of the officers, with an oath.

"Don't make too sure of that, my good fellow. You fancied you had him, I have no doubt, and you fancied you had nothing to do but to walk up here and find him; and instead, here is Long, who is the only one who finds the whole affair something worse than a hoax!"

"D—n it! I could cat my own head."

"No doubt of it. But I am not at all disappointed. Oh dear, no. 'Caught Claude Duval!' says I, 'have they? Very good. When I see him, I'll believe it, that's all.' Why, what do you think he did now? I'll tell you, though it's been kept snug. He actually, when he got out of Newgate, walked to Guildhall, and took the Lord Mayor's chaplain's own carriage, and drove off with it. What do you think of that? Lord bless you, Claude Duval is not so easily nabbed as you all seem to think. Oh dear, no!"

The jeering upon the part of the sheriff's man was more aggravating to the officers even than the loss of the prisoner, and it went a long way to keep their faculties in a confused state.

"Confound you," said one of them, "for a gabbling fool. You go on talk—talk—talk, and don't give one leave to think over the affair. How came Long's body here, I wonder?"

"I suppose," said the other, "Claude Duval, when he walked off, put it here for the fun of the thing."

"It must be so, and he pretending to be so bad, too."

"Master—master—master!" cried a voice from below. "Master!"

"What now?" cried the landlord. "What is it, Sam? Who's chimney's on fire?"

"Nobody's, sir; but I have just been to the stable, and I can't find the Frenchman's horse, sir."

"The devil you can't."

"No, sir. It's gone, and the saddle and everything else with it, sir, as clean as a whistle, sir. I had put it in a loose box, sir, as he seemed an out-and-outer, and now it's gone, as safe as last Christmas was a twelvemonth, sir."

"Oh dear, yes!" said the sheriff's man. "Oh, yes, of course, we shall find it all out by degrees. Ha!—ha Claude Duval, or the devil, or whoever you had or fancied you had here, wounded or not wounded, has helped himself to the Frenchman's horse, you hear."

"It must be so," said one of the officers, in a tone of the bitterest vexation. "And it has all happened while we were swilling tea and quizzing at the baby-face of a barmaid."

"And while I was taking my pipe quite promiscuous," said Bill, "on the bench at the front door, as innocent as a baby or a *vary dollikins*."

Oh!—oh! shan't I catch it? Why, that ere 'oss costed I don't know how much."

"More fool you, then, you great blubbering goose," said the sheriff's man, "for not taking better care of it. You had better let your master know at once. Well, gentlemen all, I think this is about as outrageous a *do* as anything I ever heard of."

"Can't we go after him?"

"East, west, north, or south, stupid? After Claude Duval! Why, he has as many hiding places as a fox. No—if you really had him he's off. I say, you great baby, what's your master's name, eh? I'll go and speak to him myself about his horse."

"Resolut is his name," said Bill; "but I'll tell him myself. He's rather a passionate man, and as he's sure to blame me, I'll have it out with him at once."

"Then I'll go with you. What sort of horse was it?"

"Why, sir, you see," said Sam, the ostler who had come to the top of the stairs to tell his tale, "it wasn't exactly a horse, seeing as it was a mare—a kind of mouse color, with the finest legs you ever saw in your life, and the cunningest looking face and ears as ever a hanimal had in this here world. She was always a looking at you, as much as to say, 'Well, Sam, old fellow. and what do you think o' things in general?'"

"Humph!"

Bill did not at all like this graphic description of Claude's celebrated mare, and he thought that he saw a thoughtful expression upon the face of the sheriff's messenger. He felt that Claude's situation was getting awfully critical; as yet, too, he had had no time to read the little scrap of writing that Claude had put into his hand, so that, take things altogether, poor Bill for a few minutes felt as miserable as any human being could feel.

"Well, well," said the sheriff's man in the tone of one who was playing a part, "I ought to apologise to this French gentleman for what has happened, and to tell him that he has a claim on the county for the value of his horse. Which is his door? I'll be down directly."

The two officers and the landlord descended the stairs, and the sheriff's messenger tapped at the door of Claude's room. It may be supposed that Duval had lost not one word of the preceding conversation, and he felt his danger, but the confidence he had in his disguise supported him, and he said in a firm voice, but a foreign accent—"Come in."

The sheriff's man opened the door and walked in; Sam, too, stood upon the threshold, and Claude rose, courteously saying—"Sir, I shall ask you to sit you always."

"Thank you, sir. I have only come to say that I am sorry your horse has been stolen."

"Vat you say—my horse—stoled? Sacre!"

"Yes, sir, Claude Duval, a celebrated highwayman, has stolen it. Nobody can help it. Gone it is, and there is an end of it. I think you may make good a claim against the county, but I don't say so for certain. However, sir, it's worth the trial."

"*Diable! Quel betisse!*" exclaimed Claude. "I must go for to think. Carry to me one chaise post at the door immediatement. I shall go at London."

"Very well, sir, the chaise shall be got ready. You will soon have it, for one was ordered and nearly ready for another purpose only just now. Good evening, sir."

"*Bon soir! Sacre—ou est mon cheval? Le voleur de grands chemin.* I shall go at London with much complaints."

"It's your best plan, sir. And any assistance the police can render you, of course you may command."

The sheriff's man made his bow and trotted down stairs. Claude made a sign to Bill, who had off his boots in a moment, and went noiselessly after

him. There was a door at the foot of the stairs to the left, which opened to the parlor. To the right it led through another door, the upper half of which was glass, to the passage, and so on out into the open air past the bar. It was the left-hand door that the sheriff's man opened and passed through. It shut behind him with a weight and pulley, but Bill pushed it open about an inch, and peered into the room. The two officers and the landlord were there. Bill was now witness to rather a curious scene. It will be remembered that this same sheriff's messenger had talked a great deal about his own cleverness, and vaped, in fact, so much that to take him at his own account, one would have considered him something more than a match for half a dozen Claude Duvals both in courage and artifice; but certainly his appearance now by no means corroborated such opinions concerning him, even if they had been for a moment entertained. He was ghastly pale, and his knees were shaking. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and it was quite clear that for some few moments he had not power to utter one articulate word. When the landlord and the two officers saw him in this condition, they stared at him as though he were bewitched, and his silence, accompanied by the look of consternation that pervaded the whole party, had about it something essentially ludicrous. It was the landlord who first found breath to say—"Bless my heart and life, what's the matter?"

"Hush! hush! hush!" gasped the sheriff's man, as he sunk into the seat that was nearest to him. "Hush! hush!—I—I—hush!"

"What is it?" said both the officers in a breath. "What is it?"

The terrified man waved his hand, and again said, "Hush!" Then, having to some extent recovered from the shock he had received, he said in a whisper—"Claude Duval is up stairs. Hush!"

"The deuce he is!"

"Hush! Don't you know him? How many men's lives do you think he always takes care to have in his power? I tell you we shall have him, but we must be cautious. If we now—four men that we are, counting the worthy landlord—were to go up stairs to take him, he would, as sure as fate, shoot two of us, and the question is, who is to be shot?"

"I beg your pardon," said the landlord, "it's no question at all as far as I am concerned, for I won't go on any consideration whatever. What have I to do with it?"

"Hush!" said the sheriff's messenger. "Hush!"

"Hush!" said the two officers, who now had become to the full as fearful as he—"hush!"

Then they all inclined their heads together, and said in whispers, "What's to be done?"

Bill had heard enough to convince himself of the imminent danger to which Claude was exposed, and he darted up stairs again, and into Claude's room. When there he uttered but one word, and that was, "Blowed!"

"What!" said Claude, "you don't mean to tell me, Bill, that stupid-looking fellow has penetrated my disguise, do you?"

"Blowed!"

"The deuce it is! How could it be? Ah, I see."

Claude took a look at himself in the glass, and he saw that one of his false moustachoes had given him the slip. This at once accounted for the discovery which the sheriff's messenger had made, and which gave that individual much more terror than it did Claude himself. He hastily heard Bill narrate what had passed in the room below, and then seizing his hat, he said—"Come along, Bill."

"Blaze away," said Bill; "that's the ticket. Oceans of pluck."

Claude darted across the corridor and into the spare room opposite. To lock the door upon the inside was his first movement. Then he said—"Bill, are you sure there are horses in the stables?"

"Yes; two rum 'uns. The officers' you know."

"Good; come along. I'll give you a twist over."

"Murder! Thank you," said Bill, as the next moment he found himself sprawling in the yard, having been twisted over the little balcony by Claude with a vengeance. The quantity of stable refuse, however, that was just there, saved him from any hurt, although he rose in not the most savory condition. Claude was at his side in a moment. The yard was pitch dark now.

"The horses! the horses!" said Claude.

"All's right—down as a hammer," said Bill. "I knows the way to the animals' cribs. Hold hard, and I'll bring 'em to the gate at end there, afore you can say John Robinson."

Bill flung open the stable door; but at the moment he did so, Sam, the ostler, appeared from the inside with a small lantern in his hand.

"Holloa!" he said, "what's the row?"

"Nothing," said Bill, and with a slashing blow in the ostler's face he sent him insensible to the farther end of the stable. "Blaze away! all's right. Now, my peonies, kim up."

Bill got hold of the horses' harness, for he had noticed where it was hung, and he flung the two saddles and accoutrements towards the gate leading to the door where Claude was standing. Then, liberating the horses from the halters that confined them, he took hold of an ear of each, and led them quietly enough across the yard.

"Now, captain," he said, "all we have got to do is to saddle the animals, and shove a bit in their mouth, and be off. Blaze away!"

It would have been no easy matter for persons unaccustomed to the care of horses to make those two fit for service in the dark; but Claude and Bill were experienced, and they had got about half through their work when the ostler, who had been stunned, recovered sufficiently to know what had happened, and rushing out of the stable, he made his way towards the house, crying as he went, in a voice loud enough to wake the dead—"Murder! thieves!—Murder! thieves!"

"Blowed again," said Bill.

Claude did not speak, but rapidly proceeded with placing the bridle properly upon the horse. The creature was, no doubt, alarmed at the sudden cries of the ostler, for it began to get rather restive. Every moment was of vital importance; to attempt an escape on foot, and leave the foe horses with which to pursue them, would be madness.

"Are you ready, Bill?" said Claude.

"Not quite. Blaze away! blowed again! Here they is."

The cries of the ostler had been effective. At the end of the yard, nearest the house, appeared the two officers, the sheriff's messenger, and the landlord. The latter carried a couple of lights, and as the night was a still one, they burnt well, and cast a faint gleam upon Claude, Bill, and the two horses.

"There they are—there they are!" cried the sheriff's messenger. "Remember, the reward for Claude Duval is three hundred pounds, and there he is."

These words were intended to stimulate the two officers and the landlord to lend their aid in securing Claude, while he, the sheriff's man, had a lively hope of being able himself to pocket the reward.

"Shall I shoot that fellow?" whispered Bill.

"No, no," said Claude. "Do not stir unless they do, and then don't throw away a bullet.

"We are too many for you, Claude Duval," said the sheriff's man. "You had better give yourself up without bloodshed. Alive or dead. I must and will have you."

Claude never spoke; and then one of the officers drawing a pistol, said, as he fired it at Claude—"He'll be off, as sure as fate, if you don't touch him with a bullet. Come on, under cover of the smoke."

The assailants made a rush forward, and Claude was upon the point of firing at the officer who had already attempted to shoot him, when he heard a scream from one of the windows of the house. It was Kate, anxious for his

safety, who uttered the cry; and it had the effect of distracting his aim, for although he did fire, the bullet flew wide of its mark. Bang! went one of Bill's pistols at the same moment; and Sam, the ostler, bawled out that he was hit in an ignoble part of his animal economy.

"If it must be, it must be," said the sheriff's man, and taking a deliberate aim at Claude Duval, he fired. The bullet whizzed past his face in rather disagreeable proximity.

"I owe you one for that," said Claude, and he pulled the trigger of another pistol. It missed fire.

"Hurrah!" said one of the officers; "he has thrown away his pistol-shots. Come on! We have him! Hurrah! Three hundred pounds are lying in this stable-yard, and I'll pick them up."

He made a rush forward, but bang went Bill's other pistol, and he fell to the ground with a deep groan.

"Number 2! Blaze away, my tulips."

"Now for it," said the sheriff's man; "they have fired two shots each, and that uses up a pair of pistols each man. Come on. We are all safe now. Hurrah! Here's more force. This way, gentleman. Follow me."

A couple of rough-looking men had now come from the part of the house where they had been drinking porter, to the assistance of Claude's assailants; but the sheriff's man reckoned without his host when he thought it was safe to run in upon Claude, for the latter had a pair of well-charged pistols left, although Bill had no more than he had used.

"I arrest you, Claude Duval," cried the sheriff's man, "and I claim the reward."

"Take it," said Claude, "and make the best of it."

As he spoke, he fired over the horse's back into the fellow's face. He sprang up into the air with a yell, and then fell huddled up and shivering upon the cold stones. The landlord had followed with the two lights so close upon the sheriff's man, that he fell over him, but rolling a pace or two, he half rose, still holding the light towards Claude Duval, in an attitude as though he were imploring him not to take his life, as he had just taken that of the wretched man who lay in a death-struggle within a few paces of him. Claude had but one pistol now left, and he cried—

"I have a life still at my disposal; whoever is tired of his existence may come on and lose it,"

"Rush on him. He will miss. It's a £100 a-piece," cried the officer who now succeeded, "and that's worth a chance!"

They made a dash forward, but there came suddenly a blaze of light from the other side of the gate leading to the meadows. There was the tramp of a horse's feet, and Claude, upon looking round, beheld a sight that filled him with astonishment. A couple of swarthy looking men, with crape over half their faces, held lighted flambeaux, and close to the gate was Sixteen-string Jack upon Claude's horse, holding a pistol in each hand, pointed at the paralysed throng in the inn yard.

"Mount, Claude, and away," cried Jack. "Did you think I could go further from here than sufficient to pick up some assistance for you? Oh no—off and away! Now, you rascals, come on, and you'll every one of you be food for worms."

"Mount," said Bill. "Blaze away. The osses is right as trivits. Here goes."

He and Claude were mounted in a moment. Then one of the rough-looking men with the torches sprang up behind Sixteen-string Jack, and Bill made good room for the other. All this was done so rapidly, that the people in the yard, who had made so sure of capturing Claude Duval, stood like statues. Claude took off his hat gracefully, as he said—"Gentlemen, I have the honor of bidding you all good night. I suppose you have had enough of us for this time, but if not, you can hunt me up again, and I shall be happy to see you upon the same terms."

Blaze away!" said Bill, "and douce the glimmers!"

The flambeaux were extinguished in a moment, and off flew Claude and his friends into the profound darkness of the open country, leaving those in the inn-yard in a state better to be imagined than described.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was a quarter to twelve, upon that night, while Cicely, Markham, and May Russel were sitting together, in most anxious consultation concerning Claude, that the servant of the house where they had taken up their lodging came and said, that a Mr. Smith and a Mr. Jones had called, and wished to see Mr. Brereton. Markham could hardly command his voice, as he said—"Show the gentlemen in."

Two well-dressed persons were ushered into the room, and the servant closed the door. There was a few moments' silence, to allow her to get out of hearing, and then one of the new comers walked up to Cicely, and said—"My darling!"

With a cry of joy she flung her arms around him—"It is our Claude!"

"Hush! hush!" said Claude. "Be discreet both in joy and in sorrow. You see, Markham, I am safe, and I have performed my mission. This is my friend Jack. By-the-bye, how does your wound feel now, Jack?"

"Much better. It is so well bandaged, that I have but little inconvenience from it. Ladies, I feel that I ought to apologize for this intrusion, considering who and what I am."

"You are my husband's friend," said Cicely, "and that is a sacred title. I recollect and know nothing else of you. Be seated. Oh Claude, Claude, what have I not suffered in anxiety since I last saw you, and what may I not still have to suffer!"

She wept convulsively upon his bosom, and May could not conquer her tears either. It was then that Markham Brereton spoke, saying—"Now, Claude, will you listen to me? You see me; you see Cicely, whom you love; and you see your sister May, whom you love likewise. I am inclined to think that for me you have a friendship. You hear, I say nothing of yourself; but now at this time that you are free, I ask you to think of the happiness of those who are about you."

"Yes—yes?" said Cicely.

"Say on!" cried May. "Say on!"

"Do you listen to me, Claude, with anything like seriousness?"

"I do."

"Then you remember, Claude, what I said to you once before. I implore you to leave England, and seek for reputation and happiness in another land."

"How can I? What means have I?"

"Leave all to me, Claude. If you will say that you will leave England forever, you shall have the means. I am now in a condition to provide means for us all. Indeed, with the hope that I should be able to do so much as to prevail upon you to follow my advice, I have already made some arrangements. Your consent is all that is wanted. I wait your answer, Claude."

"And I too, Claude," sobbed Cicely. "I—your wife!"

"And I too, Claude," said May. "I—your sister!"

"God of Heaven!" said Claude, "what would you have me do? Am I not a proscribed man? Is not a price set upon my head? Am I not described to the very passengers in the streets in hand-bills, so that all men's hands should be raised against me? And yet you ask me to do this or the other, as though, like yourselves, I was free to go hither or thither, and no man could say to me, nay!"

"Hear me out, Claude," said Markham.

"I will."

"Then let me assure you that the reasons against your going from England are the very reasons why we wish you to go. We cannot say that you will succeed in going; but what we wish is, that you should make the attempt to get to some place where you will not be proscribed, and where you will be free to go hither or thither as you please, and no one to say to you, nay."

"And your plan?"

"It is this. If you can make your way to Southampton, you will find at the mouth of the Itchen a small bark, called the 'Rendezvous,' bound to Cherbourg. Go on board, and say you are No. 1, when it will push off at once with you. Once landed, you can write to me, and we will all three meet you by the speediest means of conveyance."

Claude was silent.

"My Claude," said Cicely, "the life of alarm I lead will kill me."

"Jack," said Claude, holding out his hand, "will you go with me?"

"To the end of the world, Claude. You know you have but to say the word to me, and I am game for any plan, here or elsewhere."

"And what think you of this plan?"

"I like it. Besides, Claude, I think you are bound to attempt it in deference to those whose happiness depends upon you. We will go together, if you like."

"I am determined," said Claude. "Let it be so. If those who of late have hunted me will let me go in peace, I will go."

"Oh, joy, joy!" cried Cicely. "We shall be happy yet."

"It is joy, Cicely," said Claude, "to hear you speak in such accents. The bloom, too, of old times, comes once more to your cheeks. Do with me what you will. Direct me at your pleasure. Heaven knows I have sufficiently been the bane of your young existence, not to hesitate to take any step which promises you something of your former happiness. I will leave England if I can, Cicely."

She could not reply to him for the tears that crowded to her sight, and she looked a thousand things that no tongue could utter. Claude's resolution was fixed.

"Hear me, Mr. Brereton," he said. "When I say to you that I will do this thing, I really mean it. If those who now persecute me will allow me in peace, with Jack, to leave England, I will leave it; but if in the attempt to do so I am hunted to desperation, woe be to those who so hunt me, for I will turn again and discard from my heart all feelings of pity that have hitherto influenced me, and against the powerful and the rich I will, in this country of mock piety and religious cant, wage an exterminating war!"

"But you will succeed," said Cicely. "Yes, Claude, you will escape."

"I hope so. But now at this moment I seem to feel ——"

"What?—Oh, what?"

"No matter. You will all of you call me superstitious, so we will say no more upon that head. Jack, you and I must carefully think over the best plan of carrying out this resolution."

The feeling which had come over Claude was a dismal presentiment of failure and misery, that were to be consequent upon the enterprise to which he had now pledged himself. A sort of shudder came over him, but he repressed the exhibition of the feeling, and having once passed his word to make the attempt, he would not draw back. The presentiment of evil was true, though; for although this was the most extraordinary of Claude's adventures that he was about to undertake, so was it in its results the most calamitous to him.

CHAPTER XLII.

As Claude Duval is now at the commencement of that string of extraordinary adventures and audacious proceedings which have been hitherto kept secret from all chroniclers of the career of that wonderful man, it becomes necessary that we should briefly state the position in which the authorities found themselves with regard to him. His repeated and daring escapes had got up a feeling of aggravation in the minds of the London and suburban police, which had completely turned into a personal feeling against Claude; and although no one could say that he had taken a life except in self-defence and to avoid arrest, and then only when hard pressed, the higher authorities of the country chose to brand him as one of the worst of murderers. Now, Claude Duval was a highwayman, and as a highwayman he

“Did his spiriting gently.”

He robbed the rich, and he robbed without violence if he could. He always treated females with courtesy, and an appeal to his feelings or his generosity was never made in vain; but he was, to all intents and purposes, a highwayman, and what is worse, he had escaped from Newgate. He had enlisted upon his side all sorts of popular sympathies in consequence of his conduct in the affair of Markham Brereton; he had defied the authorities, and, finally, he had shot Long, who was one of the pet officers of the Home Office. The result of all this was, that Lord William Bathurst, who was then Home-Secretary, sent for the sheriffs, and said—“Gentlemen, £1000 is at your disposal from the Treasury so soon as I am assured of the apprehension of the notorious Claude Duval. Let him be taken dead or alive: but mark me, gentlemen, he must be exterminated!”

“Your lordship may depend upon us,” said the sheriffs.

Within one hour after this interview, it was advertised and placarded over the city and the suburbs, that one thousand pounds would be paid for the arrest of Claude Duval, dead or alive, to any one or more persons who would bring him or his dead body to Newgate. This set every officer in the metropolis on the alert, and there commenced what may be literally called—a *man hunt*. We shall see how Claude Duval, accompanied by his old friend Sixteen-string Jack, and that Prince of Highwaymen, Dick Turpin, got through it; and now for “danger the first” which they had to encounter. The servant at the house where Markham Brereton, Cicely, and May lodged, had found out that there was some mystery going on; and when Claude and Jack arrived, she went into the next room, and by placing her ear against a small hole in the wainscot, where a knot in the wood-work had been removed, she heard something, but not all that passed. In about a quarter of an hour that servant crept down stairs into the kitchen, and so frightened was she at the mere name of the renowned Claude Duval, that she there and then, after trying to say something to her mistress, fainted away. This extraordinary conduct upon the part of the servant naturally alarmed her mistress. Some hasty but efficient restoratives were used upon the spur of the moment, and the girl recovered sufficiently to pronounce the name of Claude Duval.

“Who?” said the landlady. “Why, what is the girl dreaming about?”

“Missus, missus, Claude Duval is up stairs, and he’s going to Southampton on board a ship; but before he goes, all our throats are to be cut across and across!”

Upon this, being seriously affected by the vision of the throat-cutting, which she owed entirely to her own imagination, she fainted again. Now, the name of Claude Duval had scarcely less effect upon the mistress than upon the maid, and leaving the servant in her state of syncope, she ran out of the house and round the corner to a public house, the landlord of which

was a constable in his own right, and rushing into the bar, she screamed—
“Claude Duval!—Claude Duval!”

Now, the landlord was not a hero, and he forthwith thought that this was no other than Claude Duval himself in some artful disguise; so he popped into a cupboard and shut himself in, clutching the door fast by the panneling, at the expense of all his finger nails. The woman who had so terrified him, flung herself into a chair, and while she screamed out at the top of her voice, “Claude Duval is in my house!” she executed a fit or two of hysterics after the most approved fashion, and alarmed the whole house in the course of a few minutes. Landlady, chambermaid, cook, boots, pot-boy, and bar-maid, all congregated around her, and then the landlord emerged from the cupboard. He fully intended by so doing to exercise a pacifying influence upon all persons there assembled; but somehow or other he failed, as very many people do, of producing the effect he intended, but was strikingly successful in producing the very reverse, the more especially as he prefaced his appeal with the exclamatory observation of “Here I am—here I am!”

Who could the assembled cowards suppose it to be but the veritable Claude Duval himself? and, therefore, it was no wonder that the chambermaid fell over the landlady, and the pot-boy fell over the chambermaid, and everybody else fell over these.

“It’s me, I tell you!” cried the landlord, and he danced round the throng like a wild Indian; and then the idea struck him that the information he had received might be worth something, so snatching his cap from a peg, upon which it proudly hung by the side of a silver tankard and two punch bowls, he rushed from the house and made the best of his way to Newgate. The valorous landlord was not disappointed. His information was valuable and highly appreciated in the classic regions of the Old Bailey; and while he is there making a sensation, we will return to Claude and his friends. They had not the remotest suspicion of what an untoward accident had occurred to already proclaim Claude’s whereabouts, and the consultation continued, and ended by Claude and Sixteen-string Jack agreeing that their best plan would be to start at once, and make a first stage on horseback as far as they could conveniently go, so as to leave London and their more immediate enemies behind them. Both Jack and Claude were quite familiar with the rode they were going to travel upon as far as Bagshot, and they did not expect to reach so far before finding it necessary to halt to refresh their horses, which were now at the public house yard in Drury Lane, where Claude had directed Jack to go from the inn near Barnes. We will, therefore, now rapidly shift the scene, and get our readers to stand with us at the door of the Old Moon Tavern in Drury Lane. Two horses are there ready caparisoned, and upon one of them is Sixteen-string Jack already mounted. The other stands close to the foot-way, and Claude Duval has his left hand over the saddle, while with his right hand he is shaking the landlord by the digits.

“God bless you, my boy,” said old Anthony, “take care of yourself.”

“I mean to do so,” said Claude, “and if we should never meet again, Anthony, you will hear of me.”

“Meet again? Pho! We shall meet again, lad, take my word for it. You are a Knight of the Road, and a Knight of the Road you will be till—but no matter. They won’t let you go, boy, I tell you; but you can try. I say, we shall meet again.”

“A lad came up at the moment, and said—“Anthony, can you hold that lantern up a bit, and give a fellow a light?”

“Ay—ay, that can I. You are one of the right sort.”

The lad had a piece of printed paper in his hand, which he was about to twist up for the purpose of making a pipe-light of it; but touching his hat to Claude, he said, in a voice of respect mingled with affection—

“Captain, you would, perhaps, like to see this first?”

“Do you know me?” said Claude, as he took the paper.

"Yes, captain. You saved me once from the grabs, at the risk of your own capture. Read it."

Claude took the paper, and saw it was the notice offering a thousand pounds reward for him. He handed it back with a smile, as he said—"Do people light their pipes here with thousand pound notes? Why, here I am, and any stout fellow might take me, or shoot me, at all events."

The lad shook his head, and lit his pipe with the placard.

"Ah, Claude," said Matthew, "you leave good friends behind; but if you will be off, good-bye, and the sooner you go now, the better."

Claude shook hands with the lad, and then vaulted into his saddle. He gave the rein to the noble steed he bestrode, and he and Sixteen-string Jack trotted over the uneven pavement of Drury Lane, and making the best of their way westward, they soon cleared the houses, and got upon the high-road to Brentford, hoping at all events to reach Staines before it would be necessary to make any very considerable halt. They were both plainly dressed, but each had strapped to his saddle-back a small valise, in which there were materials for some very opposite disguises, and each had a good pair of pistols, upon which he could rely. And now we must for a very short time indeed leave them to trot down the Brentford Road, while we detail the extraordinary steps which the police authorities, backed by the Home Office, took for the apprehension of Claude. A body of men, no less than thirty in number, was collected together; and, as the authorities did not for a moment doubt that it was really the intention of Claude to get to Southampton, whether for the purpose of embarkation or not, they, by hard riding across the country, stationed these men in parties of three along the high-road, with directions for them to trot for some miles to and fro upon the road, and intercept any one suspected. Now, the distance from London to Southampton being but seventy-five miles, these thirty men commanded the road extremely well, and more particularly so, as they did not commence their surveillance until they got to Hounslow and its vicinity. Their orders distinctly were to capture or kill Claude Duval.

It was known to them that Claude was always accompanied by a friend as brave and daring as himself, but who this could be, not a little puzzled these wisecracks, for, of course, they little dreamed it was SIXTEEN-STRING JACK, he having been so recently executed. That DIK TURPIN was occasionally of his party was also well known, and it added not a little to their difficulties that these three men were well mounted, well armed, and well nerved, and a good match for any ten ordinary thief-takers.

Claude Duval and Sixteen-String Jack had received timely notice of these vast efforts which were being made for their capture, and had resolved to lead their pursuers somewhat of a cross-country dance.

Assuming, therefore, the disguise and relative position of master and man, they made an early start from their late retreat, and steered a direct course for the great Western Road, the favorite haunt of all the most celebrated Highwaymen.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The horses had had a good night's rest in an excellent stable, so that they were as fresh as the morning, and when put to a canter, got over the ground in famous style. The only draw back upon the ride was the fact, that both Claude and Jack were doing it upon empty stomachs. But this was a draw-back which they meant to remedy upon the first opportunity that occurred. Still they had to ride a considerable distance before they came to any house of entertainment; and they had skirted the little village of West End, and got into the immediate vicinity of the Edgeware Road, before they saw the swinging sign of an inn called "The White Horse."

They drew rein at the door of the little inn, and the ostler came to take charge of their horses.

"Feed 'em, sir?"

"No. Only hay and water," said Claude.

He dismounted and walked into the house. The landlady met him with a curtsy in the passage.

"Can I have breakfast, madam?"

"Oh dear, yes, sir. Certainly, anything you please, sir. There's a room upstairs. Indeed, there's a nice room below, but Joliffe is there."

"Who is he?" said Claude as he followed the landlady up the stairs.

"Why, sir, he is the constable, and as they say Claude Duval is about Hampstead, they are going to swear in some men."

"Really," said Claude, as the landlady threw open a door, and ushered him into a neat bow-windowed room, looking to the front of the house.

"Yes, sir, but I don't believe it."

"Indeed."

"No, sir; for the person who says it, between you and me and the post, I wouldn't believe him on his oath."

"And who is that?"

"Old Matthew, who keeps the Antlers."

"His own antlers?"

"Dear me, what a gentleman you are to catch up one. The Antlers inn, I mean, which, though I say it, perhaps, who should not, is no more to be compared to the White Horse, than chalk is to old cheese."

"And so he actually says that Claude Duval is in the neighborhood?"

"Why, sir; when I say he says it, perhaps after all I ought not, for he don't want anybody to know as much, but I heard Mr. Joliffe say that he got a letter, what he called a—a—synonymous letter, I think."

"Anonymous, I presume?"

"Very likely, sir. It was something of that sort at all events; he says that Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, was in the neighborhood, and he soon found out it came from Matthew, and then they do say that the York mail has been stopped. But I am gossiping without attending to what you want, sir. Pray what may I bring you?"

"As good a breakfast as you can. I will leave it entirely to you."

The landlady made an exit, and when she was gone, Claude examined the priming of his pistols; having thoroughly satisfied himself that they were in good working condition, Claude became rather anxious that Jack should be made aware of the state of affairs at the White Horse. He thought the best way to do this would be boldly to ring the bell, and order Jack to be shown up to him. He did so, and in answer to the summons, rather a lout of a lad made his appearance, and when Claude said, "Show my servant this room, and tell him I want him," he looked as though he were too stupid to understand even so simple an affair, but departed on the errand.

"I won't go without my breakfast if I can help it," thought Claude.

At this moment he heard a noise of footsteps upon the stairs and the

idea that danger was approaching came to his mind. He sprang to his feet and stood with a pistol in each hand. In a moment he heard the landlady say:—

"The back room, Mr. Joliffe. There's a gentleman in the front."

"Oh, very well," said the voice. "Now, my lads, come along, and I will give you your instructions how to act in this matter."

The clatter of feet died away in the room adjoining to that in which Claude was, and then, before he could decide upon any particular course of action, the landlady herself came in to lay the cloth for his breakfast. She was followed closely by Jack, to whom, it appeared, the waiter had duly delivered Claude's message.

"I hope, sir," said the landlady, "you will excuse the house not being quite so quiet as it is usually, but Mr. Joliffe finds that the public room down stairs, of course, can't be kept all to himself, so he has come to the back room on this floor; but the constables will soon be all gone, and then there will be no noise at all."

"This Mr. Joliffe you say, is a constable?"

"Why, yes, sir; and he is a sort of a clerk to the magistrates hereabouts, and all that sort of thing. You see, sir, he is going to stay here all day, and send people out to catch Duval, and to hear what reports they can bring him, and then, I dare say, we shall have Sir Lionel Feversham too, in the course of the day, here. That is the son of the old baronet who was killed on the heath, they do say, by Claude Duval, long ago." (For an account of this daring deed, see one of the earlier chapters of this work.) "But one must not believe all one hears."

"Certainly not, madam."

The boy now made his appearance with a tray, upon which was, certainly, a breakfast that Claude felt strongly inclined to do justice to. There were eggs in abundance, grilled ham, salt fish, and coffee and hot rolls, a breakfast peculiarly inviting to one who had ridden six miles on an empty stomach. Jack uttered not a word while the landlady was speaking, but when she had left the room, he said:—

"Claude—Claude."

"Hush, Jack! Do you forget that in the next room there is danger?"

"No—no. I heard all—I know all; but my voice was not sufficiently loud to reach any ears but yours. What will you do?"

"Eat my breakfast, Jack."

"What! Can you sit down to breakfast while those who would destroy you are only divided from you by a thin partition?"

"And why not, Jack? With my breakfast, I assure you that I shall feel much more ready to combat with them than without it. And now that we are here, sit down, and as rapidly as may be, refresh yourself. We may have work before us that possibly will interfere with our dinner. What have you heard below, Jack?"

"Only that the whole country will soon be in arms against us."

"Humph! Eat away, Jack."

"I am satisfied."

"Very well—so am I. Now go, and boldly get the horses to the door. There is no one there, I think."

As he spoke, Claude rose and went to the window, which commanded a good view of the front of the inn, and a road that led from it to Hampstead. After a moment he turned and beckoned to Jack.

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"Come and look. Do you know that man in the rough great coat, coming down the road?"

"Yes—yes. It is Matthew the informer."

"To be sure it is. He is coming here to consult with the Mr. Joliffe who is in the next room, and a most fortunate circumstance it is too."

"Fortunate?"

"Yes, Jack, for as true as I stand here, I will frighten that Mr. Joliffe, and old Matthew, into letting us go as quietly as they ever mean to go themselves from this inn. Wait until he comes up."

Jack did wait, and in the course of about five minutes, the greater portion of which were consumed by Mr. Matthew in rousing his spirits down stairs at the bar of the White Horse with something strong, he was heard slowly coming up to speak to Joliffe. Claude thought it just possible he might open the wrong door, and as he did not at that juncture want an interview with Matthew, he approached it, and held the lock. His suspicions were correct, for Matthew did try that room.

"Mr. Joliffe," he said, "it's only me."

Joliffe heard him, and called from the back room to him. "This way, Matthew—this way—I am in the back room."

"Oh, very well, sir," said Matthew. "Thank you, sir."

The door of the back room was opened, and closed again upon Mr. Matthew; after which, Claude, in a whisper to Jack, said:—

"Well, what do you think of our affair now, Jack. Are we not in a prosperous condition?"

"Very; but hark! Some one else is coming upstairs. Hold the door still, Claude."

"Ah, this visitor of Mr. Joliffe's knows the way. I feel a great desire to know what he says. Jack, you turn your attention to watching for the approach of any one from below, while I do these gentry the honor of listening to what they may be talking about."

This was hazardous, but it was the only way in which Claude could ascertain the amount of his danger. While Jack with his body bent over the balustrades of the staircase, listened for any sound that might come from below. Claude placed his ear to the keyhole of the next apartment.

"Are you sure?" he heard some one say."

"If they are not the horses of Claude Duval, and the man who goes about with him, I will consent to be hung," said another.

"There, you be off, and get what armed assistance you can from Hampstead," said Joliffe, "while I and Matthew remain here. You need not be gone above an hour at the outside; and, for the love of Heaven, I beg that you will make no alarm here, for if you do, I won't take upon myself to say what might be the consequences."

Claude heard enough. With rapidity he got back to his room again with Jack, and then he closed the door carefully. In another moment, he heard the man who was named Simson, and who had brought the report about the horses, go down stairs at great speed.

"What will you do, Claude?" again interposed Jack.

"Hark you, Jack—we must get away. You go down stairs and get the horses to the door, and trust me for coming after you."

"No—no, Claude, you are risking too much. If you are really going to face those men, let me be with you."

"Believe me, Jack, there is very little danger in this whole affair, and none at all against which I cannot be fully prepared. Go, if you really regard me, and get the horses to the door."

"Yes," replied Jack.

Without another word Jack left the room, and then Claude began to make his preparations for the interview he was determined to have with Joliffe and Matthew, the landlord of the Antlers. He found in a drawer of the room some corks, and providing himself with two of the largest, he put them in his pocket, and then with a double-barrelled pistol in his right hand—a small but admirable weapon, which he knew he could depend upon—he coolly walked across the landing, and with a sudden movement opened at once the door of the back room, in which were his two foes.

CHAPTER XLIV.

JOLIFFE had a bottle of wine before him, and upon the table, likewise, was a plate with some nuts in it. Matthew was facing the door, as well as Joliffe, so that they both had the full advantage of seeing Claude the moment he came into the room; and stare they did with all the power they were capable of. Claude closed the door immediately, and said, in quite a composed and confidential sort of voice—

“Gentlemen, have you any real business with me?”

“Who are you?” said Joliffe, rising.

“Sit still, sir. I am Claude Duval.”

Joliffe sunk into his seat again, and turned as white as a sheet, while Matthew’s teeth palpably chattered in his head, and his knees smote each other under the table.

“Sir,” added Claude, looking hard at Joliffe, “have you any business with me?” I was led to believe that you wished nothing more than to apprehend me, and that, by coming into your society, I should be giving you the desired opportunity. Come, sir, you are armed. Here am I, the notorious Claude Duval. Why don’t you immortalize yourself by taking me at once?”

“Here goes then,” said Joliffe, suddenly pulling his hand from under the table. “Here goes for a try at it.”

A pistol was in his grasp, but Matthew caught him by the arm, exclaiming—

“No, no, Joliffe. Mr. Joliffe don’t try it. You might as well try to shoot the devil himself, as Claude Duval. I tell you, sir, he is shot proof. Don’t attempt it. You will fail, and then we are dead men.”

Claude did not give Joliffe much time to contest the matter with Matthew, but leaning over the table, he wrested the pistol from him in a moment, and laid it out of reach, saying as he did so—

“Well, sir, have you done what you intend, or have you any other snug little chance ready, by which you think you may catch me?”

“Have mercy upon me!”

“Mercy!—what have you done to me, either of you, that you should call upon me for mercy? Mr. Joliffe, it is your aim to try and take me. It is mine to elude your attempt. I am not cruel nor revengeful.”

“Then you don’t mean to do me any hurt?” said Joliffe.

“Certainly not.”

“Then, Claude Duval, you are one of the most generous of men, for any one but yourself would take my life for that pistol business; and to show you that I appreciate your generosity, there is the fellow to the pistol you have already taken from me.”

As he said this, Joliffe took another pistol from his pocket, and laid it upon the table before Claude, who removed it more for the sake of keeping it out of Matthew’s way than Joliffe’s, for of the latter he had now no suspicions, but of the former he had abundance.

“Now, Mr. Joliffe,” said Claude, “while I am here, you are acting under duress, but the moment my back is turned it will be your duty to give an alarm.”

Joliffe said nothing, but he felt the full force of what Claude said, and when the latter added—

“Therefore, Mr. Joliffe, I must prevent you, by gagging and binding, from giving the alarm I speak of, because it is your duty to give it; and I must gag and bind you still more firmly, because it is your inclination to do it, Matthew.”

Matthew merely nodded.

Claude began upon Matthew. First he tied his hands behind him and then he propped open his mouth with the largest of the corks, and tied one

of his braces round his mouth in such a way as effectually to secure the cork in its position.

"Now, friend Matthew," he said, "I will give you leave to call if you can, until some one comes to relieve you."

"And don't drum upon the floor with your feet," said Joliffe.

"A good hint," thought Claude, and he tied Mr. Matthew's legs to the chair, in such a way that if he attempted to move much, he would get a very awkward fall. There was no doubt in Claude's mind but that he had awakened in the mind of Joliffe a grateful feeling for sparing his life, and that Joliffe had purposely given him the hint about the possibility of Matthew giving an alarm by drumming with his feet upon the floor. Acting, therefore, upon this supposition, Claude, although he went through the same process of pinioning with Mr. Joliffe, he took care that it should by no means incommode him.

"Now, gentlemen," said Claude. "I shall take my leave of you."

Neither of them could answer him, so he went at once to the door, and left the room. Without, then, waiting one moment longer, he went down stairs, and passing rapidly along the passage, emerged at the front door, where, to his great joy, he found Jack waiting with the horses. Jack was mounted upon his own, and holding Claude's by the bridle.

"Is everything settled, Jack?"

"Yes, yes! Mount."

Claude did so. The landlady appeared at the door to make her best curtsy, and in another moment Claude was off.

"Hurrah!" said Jack. "You got the better of them?"

"Easily, Jack, Matthew was the only real enemy I had there, and I have secured him sufficiently effectually, I think, to prevent him from giving any alarm until we are some distance off. Let us push on."

They put their steeds to a sharp trot, and were soon half a mile from the public-house, and rapidly approaching the Edgeware Road, when they heard the sound of a horse's hoofs coming at full gallop towards them. They both drew aside, in order to observe who it was, and to allow him to pass if desirable. A few moments sufficed to bring the horseman close at hand.

"Claude," said Jack, "it is a man who was looking at our horses in the inn yard."

The man impulsively pulled up, and his horse almost fell upon its haunches as he did so. Claude dashed forward, and caught him by one arm, exclaiming—

"Any opposition, and you are a dead man!"

"Not exactly!" said the fellow, as he with his disengaged hand drew a pistol from the side of his saddle, and presented it at Claude. The latter had just time to throw his head on one side, and to escape a couple of bullets with which it was loaded.

"Good!" said Claude. "Now my friend, take that——"

"Spare me," said the man, "I yield to you. Make your escape. There is a strong party of twelve armed men, half a mile off only."

"You don't deserve it, but I have let so many off, that I don't see why I should make a special sacrifice of you. Are they officers who are coming?"

"No, no! You are I suppose Claude Duval! nobody but he would have escaped my shot, and then spared me from the consequence of missing him."

Claude was in thought for a moment, and then he said:—

"Jack, dismount. I want you to hold this man a moment or two. Take off his horse's girth too, and open the valise. Quick, Jack; I think I hear the party he speaks of coming."

Jack could not conceive what Claude meant to do, but he rapidly obeyed the order given to him. Claude dragged the man off the horse, and handed him to Jack. One cut with a horse-whip sent the horse off at full gallop, so

that that encumbrance was got rid of. Claude then took from the valise an old scarlet coat that he had been in the habit of wearing sometimes, and a cravat with long lace ends. Both of them, with the assistance of Jack, he put upon the man, and then with some prepared gum that they always carried with them in the valise, Claude fastened upon his face a false moustache and whiskers. The next thing was to gag him, which was soon done with a piece of wood out from the hedge, and as his mouth was opened as far as it would go, he could not by any effort release himself. With the girth of the horse they bound his hands securely.

"Ah!" said Jack, "I guess, now."

"Yes," said Claude, as he pointed to the man. "This shall be Claude Duval to those who are coming. Do you think they will know him?"

"Egad!" said Jack, "his own mother would not know him."

"Good. Now, my friend, come along."

When the man found the trick that was being played him, and that he was not in a state to say one word to save himself, he got perfectly frantic with rage. He tried all he could to release himself from the gag, but that was not possible without assistance to incline it on one side. Then, by dint of the most extravagant facial grimaces, he tried to get rid of the false moustache, but in that he was equally unsuccessful, for Claude had intended them for himself, and had taken care that they should be securely stuck on. As a last, and very foolish resource, he took to kicking, and gave Jack rather a severe contusion on the shin, which Jack returned with interest.

"Look, Claude, they are coming," said Jack.

"Yes; I see them."

A body of well-mounted men turned, at this moment, an angle in the road, and when he saw them, Claude laid hold of his prisoner by the collar of the red coat, and appeared to be hauling him along. When the mounted men saw this spectacle they halted; but Claude called out in a loud voice—

"Police!—police!—constables! Are there any constables among you?"

Upon this the mounted party came dashing on, and one cried out—

"Yes—yes; I am a parish constable. What is the matter? What is all this about? Who have you got there, eh?"

"Claude Duval!"

At the sound of this name the horsemen all paused, and the one who had announced himself as a parish constable showed anything but an inclination to come any further forward. One well-dressed but severe-looking individual, rode a few paces up to Claude, and said:—

"Do you really mean to say, sir, that you have captured Claude Duval, the notorious highwayman?"

"Here he is."

"Dear me—dear me! And who are you, sir?"

"I am Major Smith," said Claude, "and was riding along, followed by my servant, when this fellow called upon me to stand and be robbed; but as that was a thing very far from my disposition to comply with, I resisted. He fired at me and missed me, and then announced himself as Claude Duval—so I took him, as you see."

"Why, good God, sir, you have done more than all the London police have been able to do!"

"Have I? What's that?"

"Why, by capturing this man. Are you aware that you will be entitled to about three thousand pounds for this important capture?"

"Really—no."

"I tell you, sir, it is so. I am a solicitor residing in this neighborhood, and can assure you of the fact. I only hope you have him secure."

Here the sham Claude made rather a violent demonstration with his feet, at the same time that he produced an unearthly sort of noise in his throat, which he, no doubt, intended should be a protest against the whole proceeding.

"Hold him fast! hold him fast!" said the attorney. "He's a most desperate fellow. Hold him fast, I beg of you, sir."

"Will you be quiet?" said Claude, at the same time he saluted the fellow with a sound kick.

"Upon my word," said the attorney, "this is a most admirable piece of business. You had better take him, Mr. Constable."

The parish constable, who rejoiced in the name of Ploddy, looked as white as a sheet, as he replied:—

"I—I—yes. That is, if the gallant major will be so good as to lodge him in the cage at Hampstead, while I go to Newgate to get some of the regular hands there to come for him. Would not that be best, sir?"

"Cage?" said the attorney. "Pho! pho!"

"Oh dear, no," said the attorney; "no cage. He would be out of that, and robbing and smiling at somebody's wife before you could say Jack Robinson. Oh, no, you must not lose sight of him, Ploddy."

"Yes, yes," said everybody, "Ploddy must take him."

"I will take him, sir, of course; but this gentleman had better go with me, as he is entitled to the reward."

"Oh, nonsense," said Claude; "I don't want any reward."

"Not want it?" said everybody.

"No, gentlemen, I don't want a reward for collaring a highwayman, who stops me to rob me. To be sure, my servant here assisted me; and if anything is to be had, he will, perhaps, put in his claim."

The constable gave a groan. From the disinterestedness of Claude, he had begun to hope that the £3,000 might find its way to him; but that the groom should waive his claim in such a manner, was a thing beyond possibility.

"Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"They say there is a reward for catching this fellow. How much do you expect of it, for helping me to get the better of him? Speak freely."

"Anything you like, sir."

"Oh, but I have nothing to do with it at all. I think—but I advance that merely as an opinion—that these affairs are always best left in the hands of the police, so perhaps this officer will satisfy you, and take the prisoner wholly to himself."

The constable whispered something to the attorney, who then said aloud:—

"If I understand you rightly, Major Smith, you renounce all claim to any portion of the reward or rewards offered for the apprehension of the notorious Claude Duval?"

"Certainly, sir. But my man here ——"

"I am coming to that. In a word, will he accept of fifty pounds, and give up his prisoner to this constable, at once waving all further claim?"

"Take it, Jack," said Claude.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Jack. "Whatever my master says is right I will do. I know he is a good master to me, and lets me want for nothing."

The attorney looked gratified, for he had a private understanding with the constable to go halves. Taking his pocket-book, then, from his pocket, he produced a fifty pound note, and handing it to Jack, said:—

"All these gentlemen are witnesses to these transactions, and I give you this fifty pounds in lieu of your claim for reward in taking Claude Duval."

"Oh, yes, it's all right," said Jack, as he coolly put the note in his pocket.

"Now. Take him," said Claude.

"Take him!" cried the lawyer.

The constable, in the most careful manner in the world, laid his hands upon the shoulder of the prisoner, saying as he did so:—

"Gentlemen all, will you come with me to the lock-up? We can easily

get a couple of men to stay with him until I return from Newgate with the officers who are used to tackle such customers as this."

"I will ride with you," said the attorney, "of course; and I dare say you will all, gentlemen, accompany the constable?"

"Yes," muttered one; "and I will have my share of the reward, too, in spite of all the bargains between all the lawyers and all the constables in the world. I see how it is."

The prisoner, when he found that he was going to be dragged away, and that the real Claude Duval would indubitably escape, got quite furious. He appeared to forget the kicks he had brought upon himself already, and in a frantic manner he assaulted with his feet any one he could get at. Poor Mr. Ploddy got the worst of it, and actually howled again from the pain inflicted on his shins. It was in vain that the attorney pulled the rope that was round the supposed culprit's neck—he kicked away.

"Oh, you don't know how to manage him," said Claude. "Here, Jack"

"Yes, sir."

"Just show the gentleman how to make him sick of that."

"Yes, sir,"

Jack now inflicted, with the heavy horseman's boots he wore, such a half dozen kicks upon the frantic prisoner that he paused from sheer exhaustion, and was as quiet as a lamb.

"That's the way, gentlemen," said Jack.

"Dear me," said Ploddy, "I—I should very much like to try it myself. Take that—upon my life—and that—it's quite refreshing and delightful—and that—to be kicking Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, in this way. Who would have thought now that I, Ploddy, parish constable of St. Johns, Hampstead, should, after all, be the man to kick Claude Duval? I always thought he was a coward.

"Did you," said Claude.

"Oh, yes indeed; and now I know it."

"Then you don't kick him half enough; if he be a coward, you should give him such a one as that."

As he spoke, Claude saluted Mr. Ploddy with a kick that sent him sprawling some half dozen yards off in the road.

"Murder—murder! Fire! Oh—oh! Goodness gracious! Oh, murder!" cried Ploddy, as he rolled over upon the road.

"Well, really," said Claude, in a tone of commiseration, "I did not think you were so tender, or I should not have touched you at all. Never mind, though."

Claude mounted as he spoke, and the constable, getting up and wiping the tears from his eyes, said—

"Won't I have you up for this, Major, what's your name, that's all. Won't I?"

"Nonsense," said Claude, "I'll claim the reward if you do."

"Oh, it's only a joke," put in the lawyer, who, the moment he heard any talk of claiming the reward, got in a fright. "It was only a joke."

"A joke," blubbered the constable, "a joke! Only you try it, sir. I'm d—d if I don't have it out upon somebody. It's all along o' you, Claude Duval. Take that, and that."

While Mr. Ploddy was revenging himself upon the sham Claude Duval, the real one, with Jack at his heels, quietly travelled off. They went on for a mile without speaking, and then Claude looked round at Jack and laughed. Jack caught the infection and laughed likewise, and then he said:—

"An easy way of earning a fifty pound note, Claude."

"Very, but the device won't last long. Let us off and away. We will put up on the Western Road, somewhere that we know to be safe, and then to-night I will begin my operations on Ealing Common. Now, mark me, Jack, the *Times* newspaper will have an account of my capture to-morrow."

"Yes," said Jack, "and they will write themselves a letter to say that it is all owing to what they have said upon the subject, from time to time."

As Jack spoke, they both emerged from a narrow lane into the heart of the little village of Willesden, just within sight of the church. Claude paused to look at it.

"Ah, Jack," he said, "this is a venerable structure indeed."

"I have often regarded it," remarked Jack, "under very different feelings than the present. Sometimes, in good truth, I hardly know myself, when I look back upon the picture of what I once was, and contrast it with what I am now."

"Retrospection, Jack," said Claude, "is at the best but an unprofitable speculation. Let it be for us to look forward. The past is too full of shadows for either of us to get anything but the heart-ache to strive to pierce the gloom."

"True—true."

"And now, Jack, do you know the way to the Western Road?"

"Yes, perfectly. Here is a lane that will lead to a little place called Harlesdon Green, and from there we can easily get upon a high road that will bring us out near Ealing Common."

"Good. Let us push on, Jack."

They turned their horses' heads down the lane Jack spoke of, and soon left Willesden behind them, much to the chagrin of an innkeeper, who from his door had been watching them, and hoping that they would make a halt at his house of "good entertainment for man and beast," as the sign signified. The lane was one of those pretty thoroughfares which are so abundant in the rural districts of England, and which with their luxuriant hedges and large elm trees present so beautiful a picture of verdant loveliness. They pursued it for some distance in silence. Claude spoke at length:—

"Jack, how stands the Exchequer?"

"In other words, Claude, how much money have I?"

"Exactly."

"Then I am sorry to say," said Jack, "my stock is getting very low."

"Humph? and my pocket is low. We must transact some business, Jack, for it won't do to run short in so essential a particular."

"Hold," said Jack, laughing. "Upon my word, I quite forgot our friend the lawyer's fifty pound note. That had slipped my memory, Claude. But it is rather a cumbrous article here, in the country, to get changed."

"It is. What have we here?"

"A toll-bar, I think. Yes. It stops this lane, which otherwise would lead folks into Harrow Road toll-free."

"I have an aversion to this species of impost," said Claude, "and don't intend to pay. We shall, perhaps, have a little adventure here. Come on, Jack."

A man with a white apron made his appearance, and stood by the gate.

"My friend," said Claude, "can you oblige us with change for a fifty pound note?"

The man looked angry, for toll keepers, probably from a considerable amount of jeering, and what is vulgarly called chaffing, which they have to endure in the course of their vocation, are an irascible race. He muttered something, in which the principal word was certainly "gammon," and then roughly added:—

"Threepence a piece, and this gate clears nothing."

"Really!" said Claude. "How obliging you are."

The man slammed the gate shut with an air as though he would have said, "Get past that if you can!" and then, thrusting his hands into two little pockets that were in his apron, he whistled from sheer aggravation, and crouched into the little sentry-box of a house, in which he defied the cold with a fire that occupied a fourth of its area.

"This gate may clear nothing," said Claude, "but that is no reason, Jack, why we should not clear the gate—so here goes."

One touch to his horse was sufficient, and over he went, clearing the obstruction in gallant style. Jack was a good horseman, and followed upon the instant. The toll-man just flew out in time to see that his gate was not quite high enough, and our friends left him staring, and swearing, and exclaiming:—

“There’s sixpence clean gone. Threepence for me and threepence for master, as I always divides it, and there’s only been a donkey through all this blessed day.”

The road now wound up a hill, and when they reached the summit they had a very fine view of the surrounding country, and of Willesden and Neasdon, by turning a glance in the direction from whence they had come. Ealing Common, then much more of a wild and desolate place than at present, was distinctly visible in the distance, and a tortuous looking road led to it.

“You see the route?” said Jack.

“Perfectly. Do you observe a carriage, Jack, coming along that road to the left, there among the trees?”

“I do—I do. And a handsome turn-out it is.”

“Yes, but yet there is an air of mystery about it. Don’t you see that the servants have no liveries, or they have coats over them, with an evident design to hide them. Let us watch where the coachman goes to.”

The carriage drove up to the door of an inn that was about a quarter of a mile from where Claude and Jack were, and the horses’ heads were deliberately turned in the direction of the Western Road.

“Suppose we ride up,” said Claude, “and take a look at those folks. They may afford us some sport for all we know to the contrary, and if they are going in our direction they may have some smaller change about them than we have, which may come in handy just at the present juncture. Do you see anything against the proposition, Jack?”

“Nothing. Business is business.”

At a quiet trot they both made their way to the inn, where the carriage was in waiting, and they were not many minutes in reaching it. The vehicle itself was empty, and the footman and coachman were regaling themselves with something warm in rather a hasty manner, as though they expected to be interrupted every moment. Jack now assumed the character of Claude’s servant, and held the bridle while Claude alighted, and with a careless air strolled into the inn.

“This way to the coffee-room, sir,” said a waiter.

Claude followed him, and was led into a large room, at one of the windows of which were two persons in deep and earnest conversation. One was a pale-faced man with a peculiar obliquity of vision; the other was taller, and his countenance bespoke dissipation early and late. Claude ordered some brandy, and the two men just glanced at him as he sat down at a considerable distance from them. They had a bottle of wine before them, and a couple of glasses. It was quite evident to Claude that they lowered their tone after his entrance, because the manner of both of them was constrained rather, and Claude, in order to put them at their ease, took up a newspaper, with which he entirely covered his face from their observation, and which he affected to read. This seemed to give them more confidence, and he heard one say, with tolerable distinctness:—

“Oh, it is only some traveller.”

“Exactly, my lord,” said the other; “and—and as your lordship was saying—”

“As I was saying, nothing can be easier. You have the letter, and you cannot possibly find any difficulty in getting her away from the school.”

“I should think not, my lord.”

“The house is in a lonely situation upon the common. We can dine here, or take a drive somewhere else until nightfall, and then, of course, I will take good care that the carriage is close at hand.”

"It shall all be done to your lordship's satisfaction."

"I am sure of that when you are entrusted with anything. I never saw a girl in all my life that I was so anxious to take to the villa; upon my word, she is the most charming piquant little creature that you can imagine."

"Your lordship's taste is unquestionable, and I sincerely hope she will, for a time, adorn your lordship's villa. Repton House, I think is the name?"

"Yes, Repton House, and the girl's name is Florence Darvel, so you can have no sort of difficulty. Only, for the love of all that is gracious, avoid that encumbrance of mine, Jane Lee."

"I will, my lord. It is a pity that your lordship's illegitimate daughter, Jane Lee, is at the same school."

"A thousand pities: and yet, if I had not called once there, to be sure that she was alive—for I would not trust the mother's word—I should not have seen Florence. I did hope to find that Jane was not in existence, and then I should have got out of the settlement I was silly enough to make upon her when the mother was with me; but when I did see her, the likeness to her mother was too unmistakeable."

"And to your lordship?"

"Well—well, she is like me. Confound her."

"Does your lordship know anything of the friends of Florence Darvel?"

"Friends! Relations, I suppose you mean, Clickney?"

"He!—he! Your lordship is so—so sarcastic."

"Well, who, in the name of wonder and truth-telling, ever heard of relations being friends, I should like to know? But, to answer your question, I think—that is, I know she is the daughter of some artist, or poor gentleman of some sort or another. But that don't signify a bit. She is beautiful and attractive to me, so I put in my claim to her, and as I have money and influence, why I defy them. Drink, Clickney."

"Exactly so—Thank you, my lord. Shall I have the honor of filling your lordship's glass? As I often say, if your lordship, with your immense possessions, and hereditary name and title, cannot enjoy yourself, it would be a hard case indeed; and if people in the middle, or I may say, the lower ranks of life, have, by any charming accident, handsome daughters, they ought to feel that it is one of the peculiar blessings of the British constitution that there is an aristocracy to spend the taxes, and to take them off their hands."

There was a small touch of irony in all this, but so very slight that it might have escaped the perceptions of one much keener than the noble lord to whom the words were addressed.

"You are a sensible fellow, Clickney," said his lordship, "and I have always said so. You suit me precisely. You have no vulgar scruples, and you are amazingly discreet."

"Every man, my lord, in this world, has his price."

"And your's?"

"Is your lordship's favour, and £800 per annum."

"Besides various little perquisites in the way of expenses, and so on, eh, Clickney?"

"Exactly, my lord."

"Well, you earn your money, and I will say that you do me good service for it. But come, the horses are scarcely breathed. Suppose we take a drive of a few miles in the country, and then dine somewhere quietly."

"I am, of course, quite at your lordship's service. Shall I order the carriage to be got ready?"

"Yes—yes."

Clickney left the room, and Claude put down the paper from before his face. Over one edge of it he had taken an accurate look at his unknown lordship and Mr. Clickney, and he felt that he should know them both again under any circumstances. That he should hear anything more of importance by staying, he did not at all expect, so he rose and left the room without taking the smallest notice of his lordship; and having paid for what he had

had, he walked to the door, where Jack was anxiously waiting for him, and mounted at once.

"Any news?" said Jack.

"A little."

"Ah, I thought by the stay you were making that you was learning something interesting to us. What is it, Claude?"

"Why, Jack, I rather think that there are materials for an adventure to-night if we choose to carry it out. Listen to me, and I will tell you all that I overheard in the inn."

Claude then related to Jack the little significant dialogue that he had overheard in the inn, between his unknown lordship and the gentleman who rejoiced in the somewhat singular name of Clickney, and concluded by saying—

"What think you of all this, Jack? Shall we allow all this projected evil to take its course?"

"No—no. It is the abduction of a young lady from a boarding-school, by a wretch who can have no such thing as human feeling in his composition."

"Well, we will stop him, and make him pay likewise for the attempt. I think I can give his lordship a lesson that will not be altogether thrown away upon him. But now let us ride on until the shades of evening; I dare say we shall find some friendly shelter."

Claude having resolved to thwart this villany left the inn, and struck across the common to a snug retreat with which he was acquainted, there to await till the hour for his projected adventure.

CHAPTER XLV.

It was upon one of those strange misty, mysterious-looking evenings, incidental to the English climate at all periods of the year, but much more particularly in the spring and the autumn, that Claude and Jack issued from beneath a friendly roof where they had been hospitably entertained. In the air there was a dewy freshness, which, while it obscured the locality, was grateful enough to the feelings; and as Claude looked through the mist, he said to Jack—

"We must not wander far, or we shall lose those of whom we are in search."

Before Jack could reply, a voice cried—

"Thank God! It's all right."

"Who spoke?" said Claude.

"Only me, sir, whoever you are. It's only me. Nicodemus Clark."

"Yes, gentlemen," continued the voice, "I hid in this hedge till I heard you were in search of some one, and then, of course, I knew that you must be on the same errand as I."

"And what may that be?" said Claude, as a small stout man, after a struggle, succeeded in getting out of a hedge close at hand, and made his way up to them.

"Why, sir," he said, "Ruben Halleybut and I were coming across the common, and we met a man selling brooms, who said to us, 'If you want to make a good evening's work, you will wait about here, and nab the celebrated Claude Duval.' Well, of course, I thought it odd, and so did Ruben, for you know, sir, of the great rewards offered for Claude Duval, and we thought it a strange thing that a man should give us such a chance, when he might get it himself; but, Ruben said to me—'You stay here, Nicodemus, while I go to Hanwell, and rouse up the constabulary; so you see, that's where he has gone, and here am I.'"

"Indeed!" said Claude. "Well, it's lucky you met me."

"Well, sir, perhaps you won't object to stay till Ruben and the constabulary come back, sir, will you?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Nicodemus, but I am in possession of valuable information regarding Claude Duval."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, your information, let it come from where it might, regarding Claude Duval, is correct."

"Really?"

"It is so, you may depend. But I happen to know that he will be here disguised, and for a particular object, too. It will not be long before a plain carriage will draw up on the heath, and in that carriage will be Claude Duval."

Mr. Nicodemus shook a little.

"So you have only to open the door," added Claude, "and seize him by the collar, and make him your prisoner at once."

"Lord bless you, sir, I wouldn't for all the world. Do I look like the sort of man to lay hold of a highwayman by the collar and say, 'Come along with me, if you please, and if you don't please, I'll make you?'"

"Well then," said Claude, "I suppose your best and only plan will be to wait until the force you expect comes from Hanwell."

"Oh, sir, that's quite another thing, and if you and your servant will only stay with me in case of accidents, all may be well, sir. I am the parish beadle, and though I say it myself, I will say that a more efficient beadle never put on coat or hat."

"There can be no doubt of that," said Claude. "Your discretion is evidently something immense."

"I believe you, sir. But you were saying something about this fellow, Claude Duval."

"I was. The fact is, I happen to know that he has come down here upon a very particular errand, and if he can ever be caught at all, it will be to-night, when he is rather off his guard. Since you wish it, I will stay with you until your friends come from the village of Hanwell, and then I will point out to you and to them how you may best take Claude Duval prisoner without danger; for what earthly good can come of risking valuable life or valuable limb in a contest with such a person? If taken, it ought to be with as much safety to all concerned as possible."

These sentiments came so home to the heart of Mr. Nicodemus, that he actually wiped a tear from his left eye, and spoke in a voice husky from emotion, saying:—

"Upon my life, sir, you are a gentleman, you are indeed; and you speak for all the world, sir, like a printed book, you do. Ah, sir, if all the world was only like you."

"The world then would never get on," laughed Claude. "But my advice to you and to your friends is, that when you find the carriage I spoke of to you, and feel convinced that it contains no other than the man you seek, you will fasten up the two doors, and drive to Newgate."

"What an idea, sir. But—but—the coachman—is there a coachman?"

"Yes, and a footman too, for Claude Duval wishes to disguise himself well; so I think you must pull the coachman off his box, and take him to the Hanwell lock-up, and the footman with him to keep him company."

"That's good," said Mr. Nicodemus. "It's Claude Duval we want, and not footmen or coachmen."

"Certainly. But you will remember, and put your friends upon their guard likewise, concerning the fact that this coachman and footman we talk of are associates and accomplices of Claude Duval, not his dupes, and therefore they will say anything in the world, and lie in the most extraordinary manner, to try to get him off."

"In course, sir. In course."

"They will, no doubt, try to frighten you, and impose upon your credulity by telling you that you have made a mistake, and that it is some lord that you have taken."



Miss Halloway assisting Claude Duval to carry off Cicely from the Boarding School.

"A lord! Ha! ha! A lord! The lord will be made to dance upon nothing at Tyburn, I rather think."

"Well, well," said Claude. "Let us lose no time, for I rather think the carriage will be here presently."

At this intimation, Mr. Nicodemus kept as close as he possibly could to Claude, for notwithstanding all that had been said, he thought there might be some danger which it would be quite as well to avoid.

"If you think you will be any safer," said Claude, "you can get up behind me. There is room."

"Humph!" said Mr. Nicodemus, "I don't think I was ever outside a horse in my life."

"Indeed."

"No, sir. So you see, not knowing much about it, I don't seem to like the idea exactly of getting up behind."

"But you forget that you will not be called upon to take any part in the management of the horse. All you will have to do is to hold fast by me, and as I will take care not to fall off, I don't very well see how you are to do so."

"Hark!" cried Jack.

"What is it?" said Claude.

"I hear the sound of wheels. He whom we seek comes!"

Jack was right. The sound of wheels upon a good gravelled road, which intersected the common, came in the course of half a minute quite plainly upon his ears. The beadle had managed, with some assistance from Claude, to scramble on to the back of his horse, and then he held fast as well as he was able.

"Bless us and save us, what an adventure this will be to talk of at the Pig and Tweezers, of a Saturday-night; I think I see anybody holding up his hands and opening his eyes when I tell him how I sprung upon the horse."

"Not a doubt of it," said Claude. "Ah, I hear the tramp of horses' feet, I think. Listen."

"Yes," said Jack, "and from the west too."

"Then it's the folks from Hanwell," said Nicodemus. "They ought to have been here before this. But better late than never, says I. Oh, I can hear them myself now. Well, suppose, sir, we go on and meet them?"

"That will do," said Claude, "and you can introduce me."

"With pleasure, sir—with pleasure. Only I haven't the happiness, sir, to know who you are."

"Oh, I'm Colonel Doo."

"Colonel Doo?"

As he uttered these words, Claude Duval just gave his horse a slight touch with his heel, and it made a bound forward that very nearly cast Mr. Nicodemus to the earth, and it did make him rise up so high and come down with such a bump upon the back of the saddle that he groaned again.

"Don't let him do that again, colonel, if you can possibly help it. I begin to find that I don't much like riding, do you know. Is he all right, sir?"

"All right? Yes, to be sure. That was only a little bit of play."

"Play, was it? Lor! I wonder what he'd have done if he'd thought of treating us to a jump in earnest?"

Claude now cantered off in the direction of the road to Hanwell, and in the course of a few minutes a loud voice cried:—

"Stand!"

"Ah, that's Squadds, the butcher," said Nicodemus. "It's all right, Mr Squadds. It's me and Colonel Doo."

An irregular assemblage of some fifteen or sixteen horsemen now surrounded Claude and Jack, and by the dim night light (for twilight had fairly bidden good-bye to the common) Claude could see that some of the party had fowling-pieces, and some, old rusty blunderbusses, while one carried in a military a fashion as he could, a huge sword that had belonged to a trooper in some cavalry regiment, heaven only knows how long ago.

"Friends, all," said the beadle, "the thing is as good as done. I met the colonel and his servant on the common, and he says he will lend us a hand."

"Hush!" said Claude. "Hush! It is strictly true that, having encountered Mr. Nicodemus upon the common, and hearing from him that he was upon an expedition for the capture of Claude Duval, I did say that, for so laudible a public object, I would lend my aid. I have a plan by which he may be captured without any loss of life among the highly respectable company by which I have the honor to be surrounded. Gentlemen, if you will all place yourselves under my guidance, and follow me, all will be well."

"We will! We will! Hear! Hear!"

"Hush!"

All was still again, and then Claude turned his horse's head in the direction where he knew the carriage of his lordship would be waiting the issue of the abominable scheme for getting the young lady from the boarding-school. The whole of the troop of horsemen from Hanwell followed Claude and Jack as softly as they could make their horses step upon the verdant sod of the common, and in the course of a few minutes they saw the dim outline of a carriage. At the same moment Claude, who, from being so much

"out o' night," was quite Indian-like in his sagacity when the sun was gone, saw a man creeping along close to a hedge.

"Catch that fellow," said Claude to Jack.

"Ah, I had my eye upon him," said Jack, as he dashed forward, and, with a vigorous push, captured the secretary of my lord.

"A word above your breath and you are a dead man," said Claude, as Jack brought his prisoner before him. "Tie him up, Jack."

One of the party held Jack's horse while he tied the secretary's hands and feet, so that, as regards the latter, he was nearly helpless, and as regards the former, he was entirely so.

"Mercy!" said the fellow, "are you going to murder me?"

"No," said Claude, "although you deserve it. Throw him into the green pond, Jack. You know it."

"Well, sir, I will soon pitch him in."

"But I shall be drowned. Oh, spare my life. If it is only six inches deep I shall be drowned—oh!—oh! have mercy upon a poor man with a large family. Mercy for my family."

"Any daughters?" said Claude.

"Yes. Oh! yes."

"Do they go to boarding-school?"

This one simple question was sufficient to let the villainous secretary know at once the infamous scheme of himself and his master was known. "Do not take my life," he said. "Anything but my life."

"You hear this rascal, gentlemen?" said Claude. "Anything, he thinks, his villainies entitle him to but death."

"Oh, the rapsallion," said Nicodemus; "but we shall soon have his master now."

"Yes," said Claude. "But we must secure this fellow. Look out for a small tree, Jack, and tie him to it, so that we shall find him when we come back. His face to the tree, Jack."

Jack nodded, and at once dragged off the secretary, who was in such a horrible fright lest he should lose his life, that anything short of that was, by comparison, delightful.

"Now, gentlemen," said Claude. "Come on. Follow me. What do you see yonder?"

"A carriage."

"Well, in that carriage is your man."

A sudden retrograde movement sufficiently notified to the fact that this was in truth anything but pleasant intelligence, but Claude continued:—

"The only way to capture him, without bloodshed, will be to fasten up the doors of the carriage, and then drive to London."

"But how can that be done?"

"I and my servant will charge ourselves with that part of the affair, and if we deliver into your hands the carriage and its occupant, will you undertake to drive it to Newgate?"

"Yes—yes—yes."

"Wait a few moments, then. Jack, come with me."

Jack followed Claude; and when they got out of ear-shot of the good folks of Hanwell, Claude said to him:—

"There will be no difficulty in fastening the carriage doors?"

"I can tie them," said Jack, "and they will then resist any ordinary attempt to open them from the inside, and the more so that the noble lord will not be aware of the nature of the obstruction to his egress."

"Very well. Come and do one door, while I hold a little parley with him at the other."

Claude dashed up to the carriage, and appearing at one of the windows so suddenly that, to the perceptions of the occupant of the vehicle, he seemed more like some apparition than a living man, he said:—

"A word with you, sir."

"Who are you? Help!"

"Silence, or you are a dead man. I will shoot you with as little feeling for the consequences or compunctious visitations, as I would a mad dog. Your only chance of safety lies in being silent and submissive."

"Submissive to what?"

"To your fate."

"That is rather a—a—wide explanation," said his lordship faintly. "Who are you?"

"That is of no consequence. But we know who you are."

"Done!" said Jack, to intimate that he had fastened one of the doors of the carriage; and then Claude, while he did the other, added—

"You are the great highwayman, Claude Duval?"

"I!—I Claude Duval!"

"You don't deny it. There's a large reward offered for you, alive or dead, but we would rather take you alive."

"This is folly or madness. I am not——"

"Hush! if you deny your identity, we shall take that as a positive proof that you mean to make some desperate attempt to escape, and then it will be our duty to shoot you, and take you in dead."

"This comes of leaving my servants at the inn. Confound that secretary, where is he? I tell you, my good sir, I am not Claude Duval. You are most seriously mistaken, I assure you."

Claude put his arm into the carriage and pressed the muzzle of a pistol to his lordship's cheek, as he said—

"Repeat that, and you are a dead man."

"Done," said Jack, as he completed the fastening of the other door.

"Forward, friends," said Claude to the party of horsemen, who had kept carefully aloof during the brief parley. "Forward. He surrenders, and will allow us to carry him in safety and peace to Newgate."

At this gratifying intelligence, the horsemen advanced; and Claude, again clapping the pistol to the face of his lordship, said—

"If you do not, in a sufficiently loud voice to reach the ears of all present, acknowledge yourself to be what you are—namely, Claude Duval, the only thing I can do is to pull the trigger."

There was a something in Claude's tones, that were fearfully convincing, and in a voice, in which fear and rage struggled together, the noble occupant of the carriage said—

"I—I am Claude Duval."

"You hear him, gentlemen?" said Claude.

"Yes—yes. Oh, yes. All's right."

"Very well; now I advise that you blow his brains out at once, if he should give you the smallest trouble as you go along. If he remains quiet, I am certainly of opinion that it will be better to lodge him in the hands of the authorities alive."

Everybody, with loud demonstrations of satisfaction, concurred in this sentiment; and then, as they all could not but feel that there might be some danger in carrying the shooting of the supposed highwayman into effect, they were terribly anxious to impress upon his mind the propriety of perfect submission, and that could only be done by large talking of the off hand and determined manner in which they purposed putting him out of the world if he should exhibit a contrary disposition. No doubt his lordship thought himself surrounded by as rough desperadoes as the times could produce. One of the party mounted the coach-box, and then Claude said—

"Off with you. The cattle are good, and you will be at the gate of Newgate in half an hour."

Away they all went, leaving Claude and Jack to undisturbed possession of Ealing Common.

"Well," said Jack, "this is ridiculous enough."

"It is," replied Claude. "But now, Jack, we ought, I think, to give them

some sort of warning at the boarding-school, that an attempt was to be made to carry off one of the inmates."

"That is easily enough done. Hush!"

"What is the matter, Jack?"

"I am listening. I thought I heard the sound of footsteps."

"Ah! and so do I. Just hold the bridle of my horse, Jack, and I will go and reconnoiter."

"Be careful, Claude."

"I will—I will, you may be assured, Jack. Don't stir from this spot unless you hear my voice, or the sound of fire-arms."

Claude dismounted and crept along in a stooping posture, until he came to a stile which led into a preserve, and it was in that preserve that he could hear two men conversing. While he, Claude, is carefully, so as not to allow himself to be seen against the night sky, creeping through the lowest bars of the stile, we may briefly notice the noble lord's reception at the great metropolitan prison in the Old Bailey. His lordship's fears had been quite sufficiently awakened to induce him to wish to see the end of this adventure as a living man, rather than as a dead one; so after the carriage started, he said not a word for some quarter of an hour or so. All that time, however, his rage was gathering strength, and slowly getting the better of his prudence.

"Is it to be, indeed," he thought, "that I, one of the Hereditary Legislators of England, born to wealth and honors, should be thwarted in such a little common place affair as running off with a poor man's daughter? Why are the daughters of common people sometimes pretty, if they are not to be made useful in adorning the dignified leisure of a noble aristocracy, I should like to know?"

This was quite a conclusive argument to his lordship's perceptions, and certainly if uttered among his own class, or possibly of an afternoon in the House of Lords, might have met with a "Hear! hear!" His lordship then tried one of the doors, but Jack was too great an adept at the tying of knots to render it a very easy matter to open one, and suddenly recollecting that at the back of the carriage there was one of those mysterious looking little windows, about the size of one's hand, he knelt upon the seat and tried to look through that upon the dark road. Then he tapped at it with a ring he had upon his finger, but the noise of the carriage wheels drowned all sounds of that character, and his lordship, if he meant to make himself heard, must manifestly think of some more effectual means. By feeling in his pockets he found a small penknife, and with that he broke the little window at the back of the carriage, and cried—"Hilloa! Hilloa!"

"Once—twice," said somebody. Stand out of the way, Hoffendon, and don't be a fool."

"The devil!" said his lordship as he slipped off his seat and lay at the bottom of his carriage in an agony of fear.

"Thrice," said the voice, and then bang went a blunderbuss, and as his lordship remained perfectly quite, his captors thought he was certainly killed.

On went the party, and at Tyburn Gate, he who now drove could not help, in the pride of his heart, saying to the toll-taker—

"We have got Claude Duval here."

"Claude Duval?"

"Yes. He's settled at last."

"Killed?"

"Yes. We had to do it. He wouldn't be quiet."

A look of deep concern crossed the man's face, as he said:—

"You might have told me something else that would have pleased me better. Did he ever take anything from you?"

"No; but only consider the reward."

"Oh! ah! the reward. Well, every guinea of it to me would look the color of blood. Go on; I won't take the toll of you. Nothing that ever

belonged to a man that would kill for hire in such a way shall find a place in my hands."

The escort of the carriage said nothing, but passed on, and as they went down Oxford street several of them spoke to each other in whispers, and one said,—

"I like the idea of the money, but I don't half fancy being pointed at, as we all shall be, as the fellows that killed Claude Duval for the reward. That ain't pleasant, is it?"

By degrees they all got talking in this strain, so that by the time they turned out of Snow Hill into the Old Bailey, they felt about as thoroughly uncomfortable as any dozen men could. Upon the principle, however, of post-boys coming into a town, they went up to the gate of Newgate with a dash, and one rung violently at the bell by the debtors' door.

"What now?" said a gruff voice through a grating.

"We have brought you a customer."

"Come, no nonsense. What is it?"

"Claude Duval!"

"What! another take in?—ha!—ha! Dead or alive?"

"Dead."

"Humph! Well, I won't say exactly that that's a do. A bullet will settle him as well as any one else, and the greatest fool in the world may send it on its errand. Did you do it?"

This was not very complimentary, but that was no time for anything in the shape of private quarrels to take place. The whole Hanwell party were agitated, and had dismounted from their horses. The wicket-gate of the old jail was opened, and four or five officers descended the steps. One tried to open the carriage door.

"What the deuce," he said, "if he is dead, have you tied him in for?"

"Oh, never mind that. You take him out, and give us a receipt for him, that's all. Hadn't you better get a sheet?"

"A what?"

"A sheet; cos, you see, we rather think he is all in bits."

A frightful groan, with something of a howl mixed with it, now came from the carriage, and the officers themselves retreated a step or two, while the whole of the Hanwell party rushed into the vestibule of the prison in the greatest fright imaginable.

"What in the name of all that's troublesome," said one of the officers, "is the meaning of all this?"

"He ain't quite dead, that's all," faltered the beadle of Ealing. "He ain't dead, gentlemen. Take care of yourselves; he'll come out with a bounce."

"What is the meaning of all this, Jones?" said one of the officers to another. "Lend me your knife to cut this string that ties the door fast. It was no fool that put it on. But there it goes. Stand out of the way, and I'll fling open the door at once. If anybody comes out quick, pounce upon him and hold on. We will soon clap the darbies on him."

The moment was now one of intense excitement and curiosity to all present. The officers so disposed themselves that it would have been next thing to impossible for any one to escape from the carriage by a sudden rush, while the Hanwell party, looking over their heads from the porch of Newgate, betrayed, by their looks of fiendish anxiety, how deeply they felt the awful character of the whole proceeding. Added to all this, the governor of the prison, who had been roused with the information that Claude Duval was brought dead to the gate, had just reached the vestibule with a night-lamp in his hand, and with eager eyes was watching the whole of the mysterious proceedings.

"Now—now," said one. "Hush!" said another. "Make way," said a third.

"What in the name of fate," said the governor, "is the meaning of all this?"

"It's Claude Duval, sir," cried half a dozen voices.

"And all in pieces," added the beadle of Ealing.

"Out with him," cried the governor. "Don't let us have any more this nonsense. Out with him, my men, directly."

Thus urged, delay became insubordination, and the officers dragged the door of the carriage open, when, to their astonishment, there appeared upon the step, in the act of getting out, a personage of an appearance as widely different from Claude Duval as anything could well be from another. Dismay, mingled with astonishment, sat upon every countenance. The governor dropped the light he carried, and the beadle of Ealing dropped his staff, letting the little gilt crown at the top of it come with an enormous dab upon the pavement.

"Police!" said his lordship. "Is there a constable here?"

"A constable?" cried a dozen voices.

"Yes, for I have some men to give into custody who have attempted my life, as well as forcing me with them to this place, wherever it is."

He looked about him as he spoke, and the governor coming forward said—
"Ah, this is another of Claude Duval's tricks. Pray, sir, who are you?"

"A peer of the realm."

The governor gave his head a slight jerk as he added:—

"Here's a pretty affair. Why, good God, how could you all be so stupid as to bring this gentleman here, mistaking him for Claude Duval?"

"A very nice gentleman, on Ealing Common, told us this was Claude Duval in the carriage, and helped to fasten it up, so we came right on to town with it."

"Oh, you dolts, I'd take my oath that that nice gentleman upon Ealing Common was no other than Claude Duval himself."

The Hanwell party uttered a simultaneous groan, and then without a word, they turned their horses' heads from the door of the prison, and off they went as though there was some handsome premium for him who would be first out of sight of its old grey walls.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AND now that we have disposed of his lordship and his captors, we are enabled to return again to Claude, who, it will be recollected, had dismounted and left his horse in the care of Jack, while he crossed a stile into a plantation, verging upon the common, to listen to some whispered conversation that was going on between two men there. A feeling, which to himself he could not translate, seemed upon this occasion to impel Claude forward for the express purpose of listening to the conversation of these two men, and carefully treading upon the grass and pushing aside the thick growth of underwood from his path as he went, he soon gained a convenient spot in the deep shadow of an alder tree, from which he could catch every word that was uttered by them. It would appear that one of the men was arguing with the other respecting some circumstance which he felt much more confident concerning, than did his companion.

"You were always a timid slinking genius," said the one in a tone of mingled threatening and irony. "Upon my word, I wonder how I have continued to keep you about me so long."

"Why, Mr. Sachory, I rather think," said the other, "I have been at times a little useful to you."

"It is well you said a *little*," responded the other.

"Ah, well—well, we can't all expect to be so clever or so bold as you, you know, sir."

"Bah!"

"Yes. Bah! sounds very well, but it don't alter the case a bit. I do think I am afraid, and that's the fact—I can't help it. Perhaps it's foolish, perhaps it ain't, but afraid I am."

"And always will be."

"No, sir, not always. You know very well that in any quiet bit of roguery, that only wanted lying, and a good face on the matter, and in which there was no danger to life or limb, you have always been able to depend upon Sam Midge."

The other uttered an exclamation of contempt.

"But in this affair," continued Sam, "I must confess I am rather out of my element. Every man can do some things, but he can't do all things. Did I ever scruple about an oath or any little piece of perjury, in the way of the profession?"

"No—no."

"Well, then, don't get into a bluster, and be saying 'bah!' because I can't like this sort of thing, which I say again is out of my line."

"But consider the reward. I have promised you no less a sum than £500 for yourself."

"I have considered it. What do you suppose, sir, brings me here if I had not, I should like to know? He! he! he!"

Sam chuckled, as if he thought he had said rather a clever thing; and after the pause of about half a minute, the other added in a calmer and more friendly voice:—

"Well, Sam, we ought not to expect impossibilities. You are rather a fool, I admit; but yet you can do something well enough, and this, perhaps, as you say, is rather out of your line."

"It is."

"Well, well. The reward makes it well worth trying, you know. I wonder where the deuce the chaise is?"

"Ah, that Bob is always behind."

"Confound him. Now, Sam, I do hope that you will have face enough for this business."

"Face enough! Oh, if it's only that, sir, that's wanted, I shall be able to go through with it famously, I can assure you. All I'm afraid of, is the consequence if that highwayman fellow should find it all out, you see."

"Pho!—pho! How can he? You know that there would be no end of squabbling about the reward, if more than ourselves were to be engaged in his death."

"Yes, his death. Put him out of his troubles, sir, and then I shall be out of mine, but not before."

"He shall die, you may depend. Fortunately, the reward is payable whether he be taken to the authorities alive or dead, and as such is the case, I certainly prefer taking him dead."

"So do I, sir—so do I."

"Well, then, Sam, all you have to do is to take the letter to the house, and get the young woman off into the coach, and then we will send for him, and if she can but be got to write to him, come he will."

"Good."

"And then he shall not be five minutes in the house before a bullet finds a place in his skull."

"Good again," said Sam; "and then my £500 is certain."

"Certain as if you had the amount in your pocket. Ah, Sam, I suppose you will leave your old master then?"

"Rather," said Sam.

"What on earth," thought Claude, "can these two rascals be talking about?"

"Well," continued he who was the employer of the other, "well, if I don't break that boy's head for not bringing the chaise sooner. You know the school well, I suppose, Sam?"

"Oh, yes. There's no dog."

"Ah!" thought Claude, "it is another attempt upon the school, is it?—What on earth can these rascals be planning and plotting now, I wonder? Confound them, I will thwart them yet."

He considered for a few moments as to what would be the best plan of procedure; and then he thought that he could not do better than actually go to the school at once, and boldly ask to see its proprietress, and put her upon her guard respecting the danger that threatened her establishment, for although he had not heard anything sufficiently explicit from the two men to know which young lady was threatened, yet, of course, that could not materially matter, since the care of the mistress of the establishment could be directed to all. He lingered yet a little longer, with the faint hope of getting more accurate intelligence from the men; but they continued conversing in the same tone, so that it would have been useless for him to wait longer, and as for anything in the shape of retribution upon them for their projected villany, he felt that that could easily be accomplished after he had taken steps to warn the schoolmistress of the nature of the danger to her establishment, and cautioned her to take such steps as she might to guard those in her care.

There was one thing, however, that did puzzle Claude amazingly, and that was, how his capture could be in any possible way contingent upon the success of those two men in getting a young lady from the school; and yet they both spoke as if that was a consequence necessarily arising from it, and by no means an extraordinary accident. As he, Claude, went back to where he had left Jack with the horses, he turned this part of the affair over in his mind, but without being able to come to any conclusion concerning it. He was aroused from the kind of reverie into which that puzzle plunged him, by Jack calling in a menacing voice—

"Who goes there?"

"'Tis I, Jack," said Claude. "'Tis I. I thought you knew my footsteps."

"It sounded strange to me. You were walking much slower than usual."

"I was in deep thought."

"Anything amiss, Claude?" asked Jack, in a tone of anxiety.

"I will tell you all I have heard, and you can draw your own conclusion."

Claude then related to Jack the substance of the conversation that he had overheard between the two men, and when he had concluded he added—

"Now, Jack, there is some mystery here, which I confess my utter inability to unravel."

"It is a mystery indeed, Claude, which transcends my penetration. But what do you intend doing?"

"In the first place, the proprietress of the school ought to be fully warned upon no pretence to part with one of her charges."

"Yes, Claude. But there may be much danger to you, much more than either of us suspects. I would strongly advise that you ride off at once, and house yourself at your friend's again, while I stay to finish this adventure."

"No, Jack. No."

"Nay, the danger to you is a hundred-fold more than what it is to me!"

"Yes, Jack, that is true, but I cannot help feeling a something, which you may call folly, or superstition, as you please, which urges me to pursue this adventure personally; I know not how it is, but a strange feeling of satisfaction is at my heart to-night. I feel as though some great joy was impending over me; and as though Heaven, in its great goodness towards me, even so erring as I am, had looked to my happiness especially."

"You do surprise me, Claude."

"Not more than I surprise myself. But to you, Jack, I have no concealment, and as I have hesitated not to reflect upon you much of my repinings and melancholy feelings, I feel that I ought to tell you when the light of a new beam of joy irradiates my heart."

"You are right, Claude."

"I was sure you would say so. But now let us both go to the school, and we will, at all events, put those whose duty it is to be careful of the trust reposed in them, upon their guard. They must take care of their lambs, for wolves are abroad."

Claude had mounted his horse, and now both he and Jack made their way to the boarding school. This school, which, during the occurrences of that night occupied so prominent a place in the thoughts and speculations of every one, was held in what had once been a mansion of great splendour for its period, but which, having become unfashionable, had left the hands of the family that owned it, and was taken for, perhaps, the only commercial purpose it was at all adapted for, namely, a school. There were a pair of massive iron gates at its entrance, and the old sculptured arms of the family, originally owning the place, were still to be seen in bold relief upon the pediments. Beyond the gates was a carriage drive, which, pursued either to the right or to the left, alike would lead to the house, which itself was one of those old red-brick buildings of which some of the still remaining mansions of the nobility in and about London are tolerably fair specimens. The heavy iron handle of a bell, which was at the top of the gates, hung on the right of them, and it was to this that Claude appealed when he and Jack reached the place. The peal was not a very loud one, for Claude did not wish that any one but the inmates of the house should hear it, and he began to think that the reason it was paid no attention to, was, that he had not rung loud enough, but Jack was of a different opinion.

"We are apt to forget one thing," he said, "which in this case especially ought to be taken into account."

"What is that, Jack?"

"The hour, Claude. To us, all hours of the night are alike, and we are so accustomed to travelling on business by the light of the stars, that we are apt to forget the habits and the predilections of what are called the regular portion of the community."

"That is true. What is the time, Jack?"

"About two."

"No wonder, then, that we are denied admittance to a young ladies' boarding-school. What shall we do?"

"It is absolutely necessary that we get admittance here. And I think it an equally clear conclusion, that we shall never accomplish that by ringing. Now, I will open the gate if you have no objection, and we will close it behind us again."

"Do you think you can?"

"Oh, yes; easily. These large locks offer no difficulties whatever. I shall manage this one, no doubt easily."

"Do it then, Jack."

Jack dismounted, and while Claude held his horse by the bridle, he took from his pocket a picklock, and in the course of a few moments forced back the bolt of the gate lock.

"Done," he said as the ponderous gate yielded to a touch; "come on, Claude. We will find some convenient place to shelter our horses, and then we can go on foot to the house, or, if you like it better, I will wait under these chestnut trees in charge of the cattle."

"I think, Jack, that will be better."

"Very well, only be as short a time gone as you can, Claude, for after a little, when I am not with you, I get full of all sorts of foolish fears, which so work upon my imagination, that I am as wretched until I see you, as though there was a strong probability that I should never do so again."

"Be calm and confident, Jack, I will come back directly I have performed my mission, and you know I cannot come to much risk among the young ladies."

Claude rung, and rung gently too,—for after all, intractable a thing as a bell may seem to be, yet a gentle and friendly ring may be given as well as a

gentle and friendly knock at a door. He then waited for about five minutes, but not the slightest notice was taken of his application for admission, and he began to fear that it was "no use knocking at the door," and it was equally as inefficacious to ring at all.

"I must not be balked by a trifling difficulty," said Claude; so he rang again louder than before.

This time the application was not quite so ineffectual, for a quantity of cold water came down from an upper window, and would have completely drenched Claude, had he not adroitly escaped by jamming himself close up against the outer door. A female voice then said—

"Who's there, and what do you want?"

"To reply to the last question first," said Claude, "and negatively—I do not want a shower bath."

"Who are you?"

"One about as much sinned against as sinning. It matters little who I am or what the world calls me. Let it suffice that I came here as a friend."

"We have no friends," said the voice;—down went the window.

"A strange notion," thought Claude. "I will ring again."

Tingle! tingle! went the bell; and then he heard from some back window a watchman's rattle spring.

"How foolish," he said, "that they will not come and see what I want. I must and will arouse them in some way."

He retired from the door, and looked up at the window, and it was well he did so, for suddenly some large fire-arm was discharged through the door from the inner side, and would undoubtedly have killed Claude if he had been in the way of the bullets that came crashing through the panels of the door.

"Take that," said a voice.

Then a chorus of screams came from the second floor, where Claude had seen the faint light, and where he had no doubt the young ladies, who were so guarded by cold water, rattles, and fire-arms, slept.

"I will be quiet," thought Claude. "They will then fancy they have killed some one, and probably come out."

He kept out of the way of the door, for he did not know what feeling might possibly prompt a second discharge of the gun; but he was not too far off to hear a little dialogue that took place in the passage.

"Oh, Miss Lee!" said a voice, "how could you?"

"Mercy me! I don't know. But I didn't think it would go off at that end."

"But that is the thin end, and you know Mr. Delancey, the dancing master, always said the thin end."

"Oh—oh! I thought he said the thick. Indeed I did. What a noise it did make, to be sure. Oh, my nerves—my nerves."

Claude now gave a hollow groan, and then he heard something that made a clatter upon the stone flooring of the hall thrown down, which he had no doubt was the gun, and a scuffling of feet proclaimed that the whole party that had been there assembled had taken to flight.

"Confound their fears, muttered Claude: "what shall I do?"

He took another long survey of the building, and then he thought he would examine the back of it; and he accordingly made his way through the garden until he reached what was by far the most inviting aspect of the house, inasmuch as it looked into a garden full of fruits and flowers. After a time he observed a tree, the branches of which grew so close to some of the windows of the house, that he considered he might easily effect an entrance by its aid.

The tree had branches very low to the ground, so that the climbing part of the affair was by no means difficult, and in the course of a few moments Claude stood upon one of the window-sills at the back of the house. A touch sufficed to convince him that this window was open, or rather that it was not fastened. He raised it, and sprang lightly into the room, to which it

communicated. All was pitch dark within, and for some few moments Claude was in considerable doubt as to what sort of room he had thus got into. By degrees, however, his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, and he could see dimly about him. He found that he was in a long narrow room in which there was a miscellaneous assortment of goods of all descriptions, that made it look more like some second or third rate broker's shop than anything else, and from which he could deduce that he was in the spare or lumber room of the establishment. Of course, it would not suit his views to remain in such a place as that, and, accordingly, after cautiously walking about it, and ascertaining that there was but one door to it, he emerged into a narrow passage. In this passage, where Claude Duval now found himself, a number of cloaks and bonnets were hung, and there were some rout seats along one of the walls. What could be the object of those seats, or where the passage might lead to, were to him matters of mystery, but he slowly and carefully pursued it, treading as gently as foot could fall in his progress. After going about thirty feet, he found that the passage terminated in a baize door, which was quite destitute of lock, latch, or other fastening. It merely had a small handle by which it might be opened. Gently he pulled back the baize-covered door. It made not the slightest sound upon its hinges, but to his surprise, instead of finding that it opened into a room, he saw, only two yards from it, another door, the upper part of which was wholly of glass, and through which gleamed a pale light. To pause, and hold his very breath for a moment, lest he should give any alarm, where he would not wish to do so, was to Claude the wish and will of a moment. All was still, and then, just as he was about to move a step forward, he looked through the glass door, and he heard a voice say—

"I know it was Miss Williams," that fired the gun. You know, all of you, that she is very ill-tempered."

"Oh, very, very!"

"But it might have been some man coming to rob the house," said another.

"Well, but suppose it wasn't, but only somebody coming to serenade us."

"Oh my," cried the whole in chorus.

"Some Captain of the Guards," continued the young lady who had so successfully started the idea of the serenade, "and who has seen us all walking on the common, and fallen desperately in love with all of us."

"Very likely. Nothing more likely!" cried all the others. "He could not do otherwise, and oh, if he be good-looking?"

"Oh, what," said one, "if it were Claude Duval."

A general scream came from the whole lot, and then they all said how terrified they should be, and yet how delighted.

"I have heard," said one, "that he always dances a minuet with any young lady he meets, and kisses her three times."

"Oh gracious, I should tell him to don't. But don't I wish he'd come in, and frighten Miss Briggs, the old fright."

"So, ladies, said a harsh female voice, suddenly, as a door slammed, "this is the way you amuse yourselves, instead of going to sleep as you ought to do?"

Silence now reigned in the dormitory, unbroken save by the half suppressed fitters of some of the young pupils; and Miss Briggs, for it was none other than that lady herself, continued—

"Really, young ladies, I am exceedingly obliged at finding that I am so far honoured as to be made a subject of your humorous remarks in my absence. Is that you laughing, Miss Tomlins?"

"No, madam—He! he!"

"Perhaps, Miss Tomlins, four of Watts's hymns learnt by heart to-morrow before dinner will not be quite so laughable a matter as the occurrences of to-night."

"Oh, dear!"

Miss Briggs having thus pitched right down upon the culprit in a metaphorical point of view, waited until she found by the stillness in the dormitory

that she had struck terror into the whole flock, and then in a stately manner she moved off, but before she left the room, she said—

“And, young ladies, as you have all been very seriously to blame—for no young lady, who is a real young lady, could possibly be awake at this time of the night—I shall give you all nothing but bread and treacle for dinner to-morrow.”

An unusual groan came from the dormitory, under cover of which Miss Briggs made her exit.

“Mieu!” said Claude, executing a capital imitation of the cry of a cat.

The young ladies all burst into a peal of laughter.

“It’s the cat,” said one. Puss! puss! puss!”

“Mieu!” said Claude again. “Listen to me. Mieu!”

At the idea of the cat suddenly saying “Listen to me!” the young ladies were petrified with astonishment, and some of them uttered little short screams of dismay.

“Listen to me,” said Claude again in a curious squeaking voice. “Mieu! you shan’t have bread and treacle. I’ll speak to Miss Briggs and get you all off, that I will. Good night, dears. Bless you all. Go to sleep.”

At the foot of the staircase, Claude found that there was the identical room from which the gun had been fired that had produced such an amount of consternation among the young ladies of the establishment. A hastily lighted candle was upon a sideboard in this hall, and likewise from a doorway, which was partially open, there streamed a light, and the sound of voices came upon Claude’s attentive ear.

“Yes,” he heard some one say, “I will do it. I could not, Miss Briggs, go to rest again to-night with the thought upon my mind that a human being might be lying upon the very threshold of the house, wounded, and in want of help.”

“And so we may all have our throats cut through you. I declare, if a man were to cross the threshold of this house at this time of night, I would not give a pin for my life. I should just at once say to him——”

“What, madam?” said Claude, stepping into the room; “what would you say to him. Pray go on, I will hear it at once, to save you the trouble of repetition.”

Miss Briggs fell off her chair to the floor, where she sat in a state of incipient hysterics. Miss Holloway, one of the teachers, looked very pale, but she spoke with tolerable firmness as she said—

“What is the meaning of this intrusion? What want you here?”

“I come to warn you that an attempt will be made, by means of a forged letter to get some young lady from this establishment to-night. I regret that in my anxiety to bring this news my motives were mistaken.”

“Mistaken!” cried Miss Briggs.

“Yes, madam. Surely the discharge of a gun at me through the street door before I was permitted to explain myself, was rather a serious and a hasty mistake.”

“But you are not hurt?” said Miss Holloway.

“No,” said Claude, smiling, “I am rather lucky under such circumstances, and certainly have escaped without injury.”

“Thank Heaven! Oh, Miss Briggs, you see now what might have happened from precipitancy.”

“I don’t know that,” said Miss Briggs, gathering herself up from the floor; “I don’t know that.”

“But you shall know it, my dear madam,” said Claude, “before we part. It will be my duty to convince you.”

“But how can I be convinced? In the first place, how did you get into the house?”

“Permit me, madam, to keep that little secret to myself for the present, as I don’t think you would exactly like to take the same method, so it must be a matter of but little interest to you.”

A smart ring at the bell by the outer door now came plainly upon the ears of the whole party, and before any one could speak, it was sharply repeated.

"You hear," said Claude.

The whole party was as silent as the grave.

"You hear," repeated Claude.

"Gracious! what is it?"

"Just what I tell you. A villain has some object—a base one, no doubt—in getting from the protection of your roof one of the young ladies who reside here. I am here to prevent him. Doubtless after this little explanation, I shall, at least, have the privilege of being considered for the time as a friend."

"But how do we know?" said the old lady.

"Nay, madam, you will know. Ha!"

The bell was rung again smartly.

"This must be attended to," said Miss Holloway. "If this gentleman will so far oblige as to go to the door."

Claude at once left the room, and reached the street door just as the bell was rung again. It was well secured, but as there was a light in the hall, he found no difficulty in drawing back all the bolts, and removing the chains. It would appear as though the person without heard this process going on, for no more ringing took place, and when, finally, Claude opened the door wide, keeping behind it himself, a voice said—

"Is this the school?"

"Yes, sir," said Claude, capitally imitating a female voice.

A man immediately stepped into the passage, and as soon as he was far enough in to permit its being done, Claude closed the door again, and commenced deliberately doing up all the fastenings as they had been done before. This was a proceeding, particularly as it was accompanied by the sight of a man instead of a woman, which gave some sort of a shock to the visitor, and he said quickly—

"Oh, I am not going to stay."

"Very likely," said Claude, "but we always shut up."

"Oh—ah! It's a mere custom."

"Exactly. It is not very likely we are going to keep you in a young ladies' seminary. Walk in. This way."

The man, who was respectably enough attired, and who no doubt was the attorney who had had so interesting a conversation with his clerk in the plantation, followed Claude with some degree of trepidation in his countenance into the parlour. The ladies—we must in common courtesy call Miss Briggs a lady—looked surprised, and Claude, as he closed the door, said in a clear voice—

"This gentleman has some business with you, ladies; I think he is a lawyer by his looks."

The attorney started.

"Now, sir," added Claude, "be as explanatory as you can, if you please, and as brief as possible, for at this hour we are none of us inclined to occupy too much time."

A faint suspicion that all was not right seemed to come over the mind of the attorney, and yet when he took a second thought, he asked himself how it was possible that any one could by any human possibility have found out his intentions, and he spoke with some degree of boldness, as he said—

"A sick young lady is staying here."

"Perhaps," said Miss Holloway, "perhaps you will mention the young lady by name, of whom you come in quest?"

"Oh, certainly," he said, "the young lady is named Macqueen, and is a relation to my old friend, Dr. Macqueen, in whose behalf I came here."

"Is that correct?" said Claude.

"It is," replied Miss Holloway. "It is so far correct, but it is very strange that Dr. Macqueen should send a message to his niece, as we believe the young lady to be, at such a time of the night as this."

"He is very ill," said the attorney.

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes; and has been for some days."

"How strange, then, that he should write to us yesterday to ask if the young lady wanted anything, and to let him know of her state of health from day to day."

"Ah, how like him," said the attorney.

"Like him, sir?"

"Yes, he is the last man to confess indisposition until it really becomes too serious to conceal, and now that he is himself fully impressed with a belief that he is dying, he of course, at almost the last moment, wishes to see his niece, to whom he is most tenderly attached."

"Well sir, and admitting as we do, that Miss Macqueen is here, what do you wish to say to her, I may just incidentally mention, that in her state of health this is a very improper hour at which to disturb her."

"Nothing," said the attorney, "but the extreme urgency of the case would justify it."

"Then what do you propose?"

"That this letter from her uncle should be handed to her, and then, of course, I will wait her answer. If it be what I expect it will be, she will accompany me without delay, in a chaise that I have near at hand, until the Winchester mail passes, in which we can proceed."

"Impossible, sir."

"Why so, madam?"

"Such a journey, in the young lady's state of health, would be fatal to her."

"Perhaps you will allow me to decide, madam?"

"Give me the letter."

The letter was with the most polite air in the world handed to Miss Holloway, who, the moment she cast her eyes upon it, said—

"This is not Dr. Macqueen's handwriting."

"No, poor gentleman. Paralysis prevents him from moving his right hand. I wrote that by his dictation. Alas! that so truly great and good a man should not be long for this world."

"Alas, indeed. Well, sir, Miss Macqueen, who is scarcely able to walk without assistance, shall see the letter, and it will be for her own judgment to decide in this painful emergency, as to what is best to be done."

Miss Holloway soon came back, looking very pale, and with the open letter in her hand which she had taken to the sick Miss Macqueen. The attorney started from his seat, and looked anxiously at Miss Holloway, who said in a voice of emotion—

"She will attend you, sir."

The attorney looked triumphant, but Claude stepped forward, and in a deep impassioned voice, said—

"No. This must not be. I have the very strongest and best of reasons to believe that there is some gross deception in this matter, although what it exactly is, I confess I am, up to the present time, rather puzzled to know."

The attorney would have interrupted him, but Claude, in a voice that echoed through the room, said—

"Peace, sir! If you would consult your own safety you will be pleased to hear me out. Be warned in time, or the footman in disguise, as you were pleased to call me, will read you a lesson that you will not forget to your dying day."

The attorney shrunk back aghast.

"Call a constable," said Miss Briggs.

"Presently, madam," said Claude. "There is time enough. I will take care of all that. I say I have reason to suspect that some foul plot is in progress, and I have come into this house for the protection of its inmates, and please God I will protect them."

"Sir, will it please you," said Miss Holloway, "to—to read— this letter, and yet, I hardly know——"

"You feel than you are probably taking an unadvised step by asking me to do so."

"I do."

"Then do not hand it to me, I pray you. I will try by some other means to unmask villany."

"Nay, then you shall read it, sir. As the friend of Miss Macqueen, I throw myself upon you honor."

She handed the open letter to Claude, whose face as he read it became of an ashy paleness. His limbs trembled—his hands convulsively clutched the paper, and when he had concluded it, he uttered the exclamation of—

"Great God!"

The letter which had produced such unwonted effects upon Claude Duval, ran as follows—

Winchester.

"MY DEAR MADAM.—Pray resign yourself for awhile to the protection of the gentleman who will be the bearer of this letter. I am very ill indeed, and much wish to see you before I die. I hope you are better, as my most ardent wish now, is to place you once again in the hands of Claude Duval, your husband.—Believe me to be, my dear madam, yours faithfully,

JOHN MACQUEEN."

To explain the present position of Cicely, it will be necessary to retrograde a little. After the departure of her husband she had been so deeply melancholy that her spirits most seriously affected her health, and her physician, whose name was unknown to Claude, suggested a change of air, and had kindly procured her a home at the School where his niece was teacher. Dr. Macqueen had known Cicely from a child and was highly esteemed by her, thus was his name made use of to lure her from her present asylum. These particulars being all unknown to Claude, he might well exhibit the strange symptoms he did, upon reading this to him most extraordinary and incomprehensible epistle. He staggered towards the door, and held by the back of a chair as in choking accents he spoke—

"For the love of all that is good and merciful, tell me——"

"Oh, sir, say no more, I know all, but remember that I confided to your honor."

"God bless you!" cried Claude, "where—where is my Cicely."

"Your Cicely!" cried the attorney.

"Yes!" cried Claude, springing to his feet, "yes, my Cicely. Oh, joy! Oh, God, I would not give this moment to be made the emperor of the world, for now I am assured that by some miracle she is here."

"And—and you?" said Miss Holloway.

"I," he cried in a voice of thunder. "Who should I be, bnt Claude Duval!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE mention of that well-known and much dreaded name had very different effects upon the persons present. Miss Holloway quietly sat down and sobbed; and Miss Briggs, after finding she could not get out of the room without passing in what she considered too close proximity to Claude, made a futile attempt to get up the chimney, which only resulted in her getting her head and face all over soot: the attorney looked like a corpse; and when Miss Briggs, upon retiring from the chimney, flung herself upon him, and cried, "Oh, protect me," and covered his face with soot likewise, they looked a remarkably fine pair.

"Yes," added Claude, "I am Claude Duval."

"Fly—fly!" said Miss Holloway.

"But not alone—where is she?—where—oh where? Take me to her. Where is she—my Cicely—my heart's best treasure?"



Claude captures Matthew, the Informer.

No one seemed able to move to help him, and he made towards the door, and flinging it open rushed up the staircase, calling aloud as he went—

“Cicely—Cicely! ’Tis I—’tis I, Claude. Your own Claude. Speak to me. I would barter life for the joy of once again after so long an absence hearing you pronounce my name.”

He reached a door which opposed his progress; to open it was the work of a moment. Then another came in his way, and that too was opened, when, without heeding where he was going to, he rushed at once into the young ladies’ sleeping room, calling loudly—

“My love! my life! Come to these arms!”

Now there were just twenty-two young ladies in that large dormitory, and as they uttered two-and-twenty shrieks, the reader may imagine there was a tolerable uproar. Then all the twenty-two heads were put under the bed-clothes, but as curiosity to know what was going to happen next, could not be gratified by a continuance of that state of things, the twenty-two heads popped out again, as if by some species of machinery. Of course, the most interesting problem in the world was, regarding who the “Love” and the “Life” was.

“Where is she?” cried Claude, looking about him.

“Not me,” said one.

Twenty-two additional shrieks were raised, as they all thought that the intruder was only looking about him for a few moments to see which of the lot he would pounce upon, and declare to be the fair enslaver of his affections. Whether hopes or fears were most predominant, we cannot take upon ourselves to say, but the affair as regarded any personal consequences, was in a very few moments put an end to, and the young ladies were witnesses to a scene that opened their eyes considerably. It happened that at the further end of the dormitory there was a little door leading into a little chamber, that, by the kindness of Miss Holloway, had been given up to Cicely.

The little door was suddenly flung open, and certainly with far less show of weakness than might have been expected. It was excitement lent her strength. Cicely came forth to meet Claude Duval. She had heard his voice. In an instant she was in his arms.

"Claude! Claude!"

"Cicely! My Cicely!"

This was all that they for some time could say to each other, but the language of love was eloquence itself, as Claude pressed numberless kisses on her lips.

"Oh, Cicely," he at length found breath and heart to say. "Tell me, dearest and best, if this be a dream or reality?"

"Real. All real, Claude."

"And you are well—quite well?"

"Ah, no. I am faint and weak. But this joyful meeting will do more than all the doctors, ay, more than time itself, to restore me to what I was again."

"Blessings on this joyous chance. Oh, how have I deserved such happiness?"

"And you are well, Claude?"

"Well and happy. My Cicely, your eyes sparkle as of old, and there is a something too of the old colour on your cheeks. Ah, dear one, if some angel, but one short hour since, had told me I should see this sight, I might well have been pardoned for doubting the messenger from Heaven!"

Again he kissed her lips, and one of the boarders, who was in a distant corner, ejaculated—

"How nice!"

In an instant the twenty-two heads, with twenty-two faint screams, were hidden under the bed-clothes, from which some retreat about half-a-dozen voices declared how ashamed they were of a Miss Brown, such being the name of the young lady who had given utterance to the candid opinion about the niceness. Claude and Cicely, who, in the excess of their own joy had, to tell the truth, quiet forgotten that there were any spectators present, now looking around them, and Cicely feeling that some explanation was required, said—

"Ladies, this is my husband."

"Lor, Miss Macqueen," said one, "you don't say so?"

"Good looking, too," said another.

"Come away, Claude," said Cicely; "we will not part again. These young ladies have been all very—very kind to me since my residence here, the reasons for which I will impart to you at greater leisure."

Claude advanced to the middle of the room, and with a smile upon his face, he said, as he placed his hand gracefully upon his breast—

"Ladies, I wish I knew in what words to express to you the deep feeling of gratitude that now swells my heart towards you all. God bless and preserve all your pretty faces. I think I had better kiss you all round."

Twenty-two very faint screams indeed ensued upon this proposition being made, and one young lady—it was that terrible Miss Brown—said—

"Tell us who you are?"

"I am afraid you will be shocked to hear."

"No—no—no," cried all the twenty-two voices.

"Well, then, ladies," added he, "I am Claude Duval, of whom you have no doubt heard, and if you choose to capture me, you will share a very handsome reward among you."

At this moment Miss Briggs made her appearance in the room, with a countenance looking like a newly opened cask of vinegar.

"Well, young ladies," she said, "if you are young ladies, which I begin very much to doubt, I am truly astonished to see, and to hear you all, in your night-dresses, and in bed too, speaking to a man. It's monstrous—monstrous!"

"We couldn't help it," cried one.

"We are covered up," said another, "and most 'of our heads have been under the clothes."

"He hasn't kissed us yet," said a third.

"Besides," said Miss Brown, "he's very nice-looking."

"Yes, yes," said all the twenty-two.

"And we can see him much better now you have brought your light, Miss Briggs," added one, in a bantering tone. "What do you think of him, mem?"

A shrill peal of laughter followed this sally, and Miss Briggs cried—

"If I only precisely knew the young lady who said that, I would drag her out of bed at once and make a dreadful example of her. As it is, sir, you will be pleased to walk out of this house at once; and pray, do you know anything of the key of the front door? for the gentleman below can't wait any longer for Miss Macqueen, and if she don't feel disposed to go with him, he his quite willing to go without her."

"I have the key in my pocket," said Claude. "I took care to see that the door might be made fast on the inside, and suspecting a scoundrel, who is down stairs, might wish to leave the house before he had my permission so to do, I took the precaution of preventing him. I will come down and speak to that person very shortly. Cicely, do you think you could bear the fatigue of a ride on horseback for a few miles?"

"Oh, yes, yes. With you, Claude, anywhere."

"Upon my word," said Miss Briggs, "this is very pretty—very pretty indeed, sir."

"If you allude to these young ladies, madam," said Claude, "I certainly subscribe to your opinion. They are very pretty indeed, as you say; I wish I could pass the same compliment upon you."

The twenty-two young ladies all laughed outright at this, so much did they admire it; and Miss Brown actually sat up in bed.

"I will now, Cicely, leave you. Get ready," whispered Claude, "and come down stairs to the parlour as quickly as you possibly can; Jack is in the immediate vicinity of this place waiting for us."

"Yes, Claude, yes."

"Do not fret yourself by any undue haste. All is well."

He then turned to the young ladies, and said again—

"God bless you all. Good night; I shall never forget you all as long as I live, and I hope, if you ever hear of me, that you will put the most gentle construction upon all the sayings and doings of Claude Duval."

With this he moved to the door, which the terrified Briggs held open for him, and made the best of his way down the stairs to the parlour, where there were waiting those who were not a little anxious, but from different motives, to know what was going on above. When Claude reached the parlour he found it still occupied by the attorney, and Miss Holloway. He at once addressed himself to the attorney.

"Now, sir," he said, "explain yourself."

There was a something to be felt, seen, and trembled at about Claude's manner as he pronounced these words, that made the lawyer tremble, and turn a shade paler than he was before.

"What—what do you mean, sir?"

"I mean to ask you what brought you here, I mean to give you one chance of telling the truth. Do you understand me now?"

It was as plain as the nose on his face to the lawyer, that Claude saw through the whole transaction, and in this way wished him, the lawyer to confess it. He shook for a few moments, as one might suppose a prisoner at the bar to do before he says—"Guilty, my lord," and don't very clearly know whether the fond confession will procure a mitigation of his sentence or not.

It was at this moment that a knock came at the door which awakened echoes in every portion of the building by its tremendous reverberations.

This knock seemed as if it had fallen upon the heart of every one present. The attorney sprang behind a chair. Miss Briggs gave a short scream, and Miss Holloway made two steps towards Claude, as though she would have said "You can and will protect me."

Even Claude himself could not but start to hear that loud appeal to the knocker. A feeling, however, that there might be personal danger—came over Claude; and for all he knew, some imprudent domestic might open the door to those without, and produce much mischief. With this feeling strong upon him, he flew to the hall, and there found that he was only just in time to prevent a tall scraggy servant from attempting the fastenings. Then he recollected that he still had the key, safely, in his pocket, and he merely said—

"Begone. Touch the door on your peril."

Claude felt the necessity of coming to a parley with those without, lest they should get sufficiently impatient to adopt other means of entrance. He accordingly advanced to the door and rapped at it with his knuckles on the inside panel, calling in a loud voice—

"Who is there?"

"Open the door," said a voice, "or we will have it down in a few moments."

"But who are you?"

"That's no matter. Open the door."

"My mistress says, that as this is a young ladies' school, she can't think of letting the door be opened at this time of night. I'm the gardener, you must know, and am bound to protect the premises. Only tell me who you are, and what you want, and I'll go and wake up missus and tell her at once, and if she says, open the door, Joseph, then I'll open it."

A whispered consultation now took place between those outside, and at last another voice than that which had previously spoken, said—

"Tell your mistress that we are officers of the police, and that it is for the protection of her and her house that we come."

Oh, if that's it, gentlemen," said Claude, "I'll go and have her woken up, and tell her at once, that I will. Only you wait quiet a few moments—I'll come back as quick as I can. Is there thieves about, gentlemen?"

"Yes—yes."

"Very well. Oh, what a twitter I am in to be sure."

"Confound you—be quick, will you?"

"Yes, gentlemen—yes."

Claude hoped that by all this delay he should have given Cicely time to get ready to come down to the parlour and meet him, but she, poor thing, what with the weakness she was still suffering from, and the agitation consequent upon Claude's sudden and unexpected arrival at the school, was really unable to make that expedition she would have wished, and she did not come down. Claude made his way into the parlour again, where he found affairs just the same as when he left. Turning to the lawyer, he said—

"We shall meet again, sir, I have something much more important on hand just now than the taking any revenge upon you for your share in to-night's transaction."

Miss Holloway ventured an inquiry concerning the persons at the door, and Claude said—

"It is better that you should know as little of this night's proceedings as possible, and that you should hold as little converse with me as may be. If

I could get out by the back of the house it would be well, but I do not ask you, miss, to compromise yourself by aiding me so to do."

These words were accompanied by a look, the translation of which was—"Pray throw all the facilities you can in the way of my leaving by the back of the house with Cicely, but do not seem to do so, for this lawyer is playing the spy now with all the cunning in his power, and besides, you will never hear the last of it from Miss Briggs. Miss Holloway quite understood this, and she said coldly—

"You have declared yourself to be Claude Duval, the well-known highwayman, and therefore I cannot aid you."

She then left the room. Claude felt satisfied that he should now find every facility for escape by the back of the house that Miss Holloway could throw in his way, and he looked most anxiously for the appearance of Cicely, for he felt that the patience of the officers at the door must very soon be completely exhausted. While all this, then, was proceeding below, Cicely had rushed back into her little chamber, and hastily opening a trunk, she took from it some male attire that she had worn upon a previous occasion. Her idea was, that by dressing herself in that costume, she would make it much easier for Claude to get away with her, and she accordingly began, in a very hurried manner, to put on the various articles of clothing.

Claude's anxiety for the appearance of Cicely was immense, and he was standing upon the threshold of the parlour-door, which enabled him to command a view of the staircase, at the moment that she came hastily down. Before she could reach the hall, the officers who had waited outside the door got beyond all ordinary patience, and knocked again violently at the door. The sudden shock caused Cicely almost to fall; but Claude, who knew her well in her disguise, flew forward and supported her in his arms.

"Dearest and best!" he cried, "we must fly from here as quickly as possible. Do you feel your strength equal to riding?"

"Oh! yes—yes, Claude. But who is it that demands admittance here so rudely?"

"Enemies whom we will baffle yet."

"Heaven protect us!"

"Amen! Come this way, Cicely. This leads to the back of the house, does it not?"

"It does—it does, Claude!"

"One moment, and I am with you."

He left Cicely an instant alone, while he went to the door of the parlour, and extracting the key from the inside, he placed it in the lock on the outside, and in a moment had locked in the attorney and Miss Briggs.

"There," said Claude, "you are very good company for each other, and I don't think that both of you put together would have energy sufficient to break down the door, so you will remain prisoners until some one else does it for you."

He threw the key down in the hall in an obscure corner, and then clasping Cicely round the waist with his left arm, he said—

"Let those stop us who dare."

Bang!—bang!—bang! came heavy blows upon the front door, which the officers now had made up their minds to burst open, and, strong as it was, it would not probably be able to hold out long against men who would go so systematically to work against it as they would. Claude and Cicely hurried along the hall, and dashing open a pair of folding doors that divided it into two equal parts, they came to that half of it that might be said to belong more particularly to the back entrance, which was nearly as large and as available as the front. A slim female figure darted from a side room, carrying a small hand lamp.

"Help," cried Cicely, "we are lost."

"No, no," said Claude, "it is a friend. It is a young lady residing here, who will befriend us."

"This way," said Miss Holloway, "this way."

Miss Holloway had two keys in her hand, a large one and a small one; with the former she opened the house door that led into the large garden at the back, and just as she did so, a loud crash at the front door proclaimed that the officers had succeeded in breaking it open; under cover of that crash, Miss Holloway slammed shut the back-door.

"Take this key," she said to Claude, "quick—follow me!"

She fled on before them in the dim night light, for she had left the little lamp she had been carrying in a niche in the hall, and Claude, still more than half supporting Cicely, rapidly pursued her. After traversing several garden paths, Miss Holloway struck off to the left into one that led to a small door in the wall. There she paused as she said—

"The key you have fits it. Fly at once."

"Oh how can we thank you?" said Cicely, while Claude was busy unlocking the door.

"By your immediate departure," replied Miss Holloway.

"I will not say thank you," said Claude, "for I could say no less for the most trivial service. What you have done for us will sink deeply into both our hearts, Adieu."

Miss Holloway waived her hand, and Claude and Cicely passed through a small door in the wall. At that moment there arose in the garden, quite close to the house, a loud shouting of voices, and one above the rest cried—

"This way, this way; I know he has escaped at the back. Remember the reward. This way, men, this way."

"Ah!" said Claude, "so close are they on our track."

"And we are lost," said Cicely.

"Not so, dear one, not so. We are in danger, but far, I hope, from lost. Let those who are weary of this world interrupt me now."

He carefully locked the door on the outside and placed the key in his pocket; then taking a pistol in his right hand, while with his left he still supported Cicely, who was little able to endure fatigue, he walked slowly on.

"If I could but find Jack," he said.

"Where is he, Claude?"

"Close at hand. The discharge of a pistol would bring him to me, but it would likewise act as a direction to our foes. We must look for him, the distance is short."

"Ha! ha!" cried a voice "there he goes!"

Claude turned to where the voice came from, and there, perched upon the garden wall, and tolerably plainly to be seen against rather a whitish patch of sky, was the attorney who had been locked in the parlour.

"There they go. Come on, come on. Recollect you get the reward if he is taken alive or dead."

Claude levelled his pistol, there was a bright flash, and with a shriek the attorney fell into the garden.

"There's your share of it, at all events," said Claude, "without any words or quarrelling about the amount. How do you like it?"

"Gracious Heaven, have you killed him?" said Cicely.

"On, on, Cicely, there is no time for regrets. Recollect that these men would consider no death too cruel to put me to, for the sake of the gold that they would divide as the price of my murder!"

"You are right, Claude, you are right. On their own heads be the consequences. It was only my woman's nature that for a moment shrunk aghast at death in any shape, and inflicted by any one."

"Say no more, Cicely; I can fully appreciate all that you must feel."

A whistle, clear, shrill, and distinct, came upon their ears.

"Jack. It is Jack's whistle."

"Thank heaven!"

"Hold!" said a voice, and a man sprung upon Claude, and grappled him by the throat. "Whoever you are, you are my prisoner. Offer the least resistance, and I'll soon put a stop to it."

"Indeed," said Claude, "who may you be? Keep clear, Cicely, keep clear if you love me and value my safety."

"Come, come, my friend this won't do. I'll clap a pair of darbies on you in a twinkling. I'm an officer."

"Really," said Claude.

"Yes, my name is Foster."

"Then, Mr. Foster, I sincerely advise you as a friend to take your hands off me, for though I can say with Hamlet, that I am not splenetic or rash, yet I don't approve of this sort of thing, or put up with it long. Be warned."

"Oh, I dare say, you think you are a fine fellow."

The officer, who had been placed at the back of the house as a kind of scout or sentinel, actually had not the smallest idea of who he had got hold of, but commenced grappling with Claude to throw him. Upon this Claude seized him with a grasp of iron, and after they had swayed to and fro for a few moments, Claude flung him right over his shoulder on to his head. The officer lay without sense or motion, and then a voice cried in friendly accents—

"Claude, Claude!"

"Jack!" said Claude. "This way."

In another moment Jack with the two horses made his appearance, but when he saw a third person he paused and said—

"A prisoner or a friend, Claude?"

"An old friend Jack, it is Cicely."

"Cicely! Cicely!"

"Yes Jack, she is restored to me once again. Oh, Jack, I am surrounded by dangers, but I am so very—very happy."

"And I am bewildered," said Jack. "This is a dream!"

"No dream, Jack. If it were I for one should not wish to awaken from it."

"And I for another," said Jack.

"Now, Cicely," added Claude, "now, my Cicely, mount, and we will be off at once. At least we will give our foes a gallop for it."

He easily lifted Cicely, and then sprung up behind her himself; Jack mounted at the same moment, but before they could stir from the spot a rattling discharge of pistols ensued, and Claude felt sensible that some bullets had passed in most dangerous proximity to him and to Cicely.

"Speak—speak, dear one," said Claude.

"Yes, Claude, yes." "Are you unhurt?" "Perfectly."

"Jack, is all right?" "Right, Claude, right."

"Fire this from where the flashes came, and fire low."

Both Claude and Jack discharged a pistol in the direction he mentioned, and then, before the officers—for no doubt they who fired were officers—had time to load again, Claude and Jack were off and over the heath. Jack kept very close to Claude, so close that he could speak to him easily, and he now said with considerable concern of manner—

"Have you a fixed destination, Claude, or are you merely riding on at random to distance your pursuers?"

"Not that, Jack; I want to give them a good race, and then make a detour to the left, and come upon the heath again. The safest place in the world for Cicely is that farm-house in which you and I have experienced so hospitable a reception. There for a time, until her health is perfectly established, I know she will be safe."

Jack now kept about twice a horse's length behind, in order the better to listen to the foe, and to give Claude notice of his progress, and so on they dashed to Ealing. The little common was soon traversed, and they entered the village, then a much more rural spot than it is now. It only consisted of a few cottages, and to the left of the road a large white-fronted house that had been a favourite residence of the Duchess of Marlborough, but which was burnt to the ground some years ago. At that time not a soul was stirring in the little irregular street of the village, and Claude dashed on until he came to the junction of roads, one of which leads to Hanwell, and the other

right on through some straggling outskirts of the village to what is now called Ealing Park.

"To the left!" cried Claude. "To the left, Jack."

"Yes—yes. They are coming on, Claude. Ah! what is that?"

"Stand!" cried a horseman, emerging from the Hanwell Road, followed by some half dozen more well-mounted men. "Stand where you are or we fire."

"Fire away," said Claude.

As he spoke he suddenly wheeled his horse round, and took a few steps in the direction from which he had come. One pistol only was discharged at random. Claude had still a loaded double-barrelled pistol handy, but he did not wish to fire it at random. He had escaped the shot, but before he could resume his course again, one of the horsemen quickly advanced and laid hold of Cicely by the arm.

"Surrender!" he said. "You are overmatched, although you do ride double. Surrender, I say."

"Not yet," said Claude, as with a blow of the stock of the pistol he held in his hand, he struck the man from his horse. "Forward, Jack, forward!"

Claude's horse was a little alarmed at what was going on, and made a furious plunge forward. If Claude had not been the accomplished horseman he was, that plunge would have unseated him, but as it was, it only had the effect of giving him a slight start of his foes, and at once allowing the horse a free rein, off he went like the wind. Jack kept within a few paces of him, and what was strange enough was, that the horse of the man whom Claude had knocked down, kept them company, rushing on by the side of Claude's horse as if it much enjoyed the new society into which it had got. The horsemen who had been pursuing Claude across the heath, now effected a junction with those who had so inopportunistly made their appearance from the Hanwell Road, and with a tacit understanding that they were all on the same errand, they joined in the chase with abundance of good will. The superiority of both Claude's and Jack's steeds, aided no doubt by a certain amount of tact in riding, which long practice and abundant experience, under all conditions and circumstances, had given them, was soon apparent, and if the chase had to be continued right on, without either party having any help or aid with fresh cattle, no doubt could for a moment have been entertained of the result—the pursuers' horses must have broken down. Such, however, was not the case, for in such a neighbourhood the probability was that fresh parties would join the chase as it went on, so that Claude ran the risk of finding new enemies in his path at intervals, without himself having any new means of evading them, or of contesting with them. It was in this way that some of the most celebrated knights of the road, notwithstanding the manner in which they were mounted, were run down, as it were. But it will be remembered that Claude had no sort of intention of continuing an even race of such a description. His object was to turn to the left, and get back to the common as quickly as possible, if he could but shake off his pursuers for a sufficient time to practise the plan. Jack kept him steadily in view. He knew that Claude's acquaintance with the neighbourhood was tolerably exact, and he was pleased to see him take suddenly to a lane to the left, the umbrageous foliage of which rendered it quite invisible to any one at that hour who had no previous knowledge of its existence.

"Claude," said Jack. "one moment!"

"What is it?"

"Send the spare horse that is by your side, along the road. Who knows but the clatter of his hoofs may deceive the enemy?"

"A good thought. Do it Jack. I will breathe my horse a moment and wait for you."

Jack led the steed of the fallen man a few paces up the road, and then giving it a switch with his riding whip, he started off at a hard gallop. In another moment Jack was back to Claude.

"Let us walk the horses until we find we have occasion to put them to their mettle again," said Claude. "If this succeeds, we can take our way leisurely enough to Ealing Common."

The horses were now put to a fast walking pace, so that their feet made the least possible noise upon the soft ground of the verdant lane they were traversing beneath high overhanging trees.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

It would appear that, notwithstanding the great difference between the tread of one horse and of three, the party in pursuit of Claude and Jack was puzzled when it reached the corner of the lane. A halt took place, and then, after some conjectures and hypotheses had been started, one said—

"I don't think there can be any difficulty about it. The fact is, we know that Claude Duval had a companion, and they have separated, in order to puzzle us."

"What shall we do, sir?"

"Why, the only thing we can do is to follow their example. One half of our number must go down this lane, and the other half pursue the road, and don't let us waste time about it."

This arrangement was quickly concluded. There was no choice in the matter, for no one could have the smallest idea as to which of the routes the important personage they wished to capture had taken, so they had equal chances. It did so happen, however, that one of the boldest officers that the police of London could boast of, headed the party that went down the lane. They had not proceeded far before Claude heard them, and he spoke to Jack at once—

"They come, Jack. We must once more try the mettle of our steeds."

"Do you think, Claude, if we were to draw up among the trees, there is any likelihood of their passing us?"

"No, Jack, no. If they don't hear the horses' feet they will soon guess that something of the sort is being tried on, and you may depend they would not come down this lane at all if they did not feel pretty sure that one or both of us were here."

"Come on then, Claude."

"Are your pistols ready?"

"Quite, Claude, quite."

They at once dashed forward, and then the sound of their horses' feet came clearly enough upon the ears of their pursuers, and acted as a powerful incentive to their speed.

"And all this," said Cicely, "is for me. Oh, Claude, I shall begin to think that I am your evil genius."

"Evil genius, Cicely. Oh, no. You are the only good genius I have ever met with since I discarded the counsels of my poor sister, who did her utmost when quite a girl to make me different from what I now am. Ah, I did not listen to May then. Jack, keep in the middle of the lane. There is an ugly ditch on the near side."

"Claude—Claude! Who—who is that character?" exclaimed Jack.

Claude was upon the point of asking Jack to what he alluded, when to his astonishment, upon turning his eyes to the right, he saw within a few paces of him, a mounted man galloping rather close under the trees, but keeping up with him as easily as though the pace were nothing. The horse he rode was small and of great strength. It was, or by that light it looked to be, coal black, and the action of the creature, although going at such great speed, was so easy and so graceful, that had not Claude's situation induced him to keep a wary eye upon this man, his whole attention would have devolved with delight upon the steed.

"Claude! Claude!" again cried Jack, "for the love of Heaven, speak to it."
 "Hilloa!" said Claude. "You can pass on, sir. If you are a friend, say so. If an enemy, I defy you."

"Do you expect to find friends by the hedge-side, Claude Duval?" said the stranger, in a clear voice.

"Ah, you know me!"

"Why, by report, but not at all personally. Hope we shall be better acquainted though. They are hard upon your track."

"Your friends, I suppose?"

"Nonsense; I never aspired to the luxury of having a friend; but you certainly have Jack there. How are you, Jack?"

"Good God!" groaned Jack.

"Ha! ha! Jack, you were one too many for the gallows, you were. May we all have such luck!" (The allusion here made will be perfectly understood by a perusal of "JACK AND HIS BRIDE," where this remarkable escape is detailed.)

"In plain language," cried Claude, passionately, "who the devil are you? You say you have known me well by report, and if you have, you have heard among other trifles that I am not a man to be played with. Speak at once to the purpose, and say who you are, and what, in the name of all that's abominable, do you want with me!"

"Humph?" said the stranger, with the most provoking indifference of tone and manner.

This was much more than such flesh and blood as Claude Duval was capable of bearing, and suddenly wheeling round his horse's head in the direction of the stranger, he raised his hand, but ere he could grapple with the man who had so angered him, he too wheeled his horse round, so that he was out of reach, and he said—

"Is this the way to save yourself, Claude Duval? Is it wise to get into a brawl with the first stranger you meet?"

"The consequences be upon your own head?" cried Claude.

"Nay, they will fall upon yours—hush! If you remain here, and count twenty slowly, your pursuers will be upon you. Now, take my advice."

"Your advice?"

"Yes, wiser folks have taken it before to-day. Don't be angry, but trot after me until I tell you to stop. Then we can give them a volley when they are within pistol-shot of us, which I think will discomfit them sufficiently to enable me to show you how to elude them altogether."

"Dare I trust you?"

"That is a subject entirely for your own consideration, Claude Duval. If you say no, I am off again as silently as I came, and there is no harm done. If you say yes, you cannot say it too soon."

"Yes," cried Claude.

"Follow, then."

At two bounds the stranger's horse placed some thirty feet of ground between him and Claude, and then, at such a swift trot that few steeds could have come near it at a hand gallop, off they went. Claude had made up his mind to trust to the mysterious stranger, and Jack said not a word. Cicely, too, was silent, and so they pursued their way, while upon the night air came the furious beating of the horses' hoofs of those pursuing them. Suddenly the stranger paused.

"Halt!"

Claude immediately drew rein.

"The scoundrels want to kill you," he said to Claude, "but we will foil them at that game. It shall be dangerous to set a price upon any man's head in such a manner. Have you a pistol ready?"

"Yes."

"Then blaze away when I say 'Fire!' and then, without any further troubling yourself, follow me.—Fire!"

Bang! went the three pistols, for Jack fired likewise. A scene of confusion ensued, during which Claude and Jack followed their new friend through a gate into a farm-yard. The gate was closed again on the moment by some unseen agency, and there the stranger, in a low voice, said—

"Hush! Not a word, as you value your lives. Leave another to speak for you now."

Both Claude and Jack found themselves not a little puzzled by the whole of this procedure. It was so entirely out of the common way, that they could form no rational conjecture concerning it. Cicely, no doubt, was not the least surprised of the party.

"Claude," she whispered, "what will be the end of all this?"

"No matter, Cicely," he replied, "so that in its progress there is so much joy. Are you not with me?"

A silent pressure of the hand was the only reply that Cicely could give to this sentiment, uttered at a moment of such great danger, that it sufficiently showed how dear she was to him. It would appear that the unknown friend who had brought them into the farm-yard overheard them talking, for he admonished them to silence by a startling—"Hush!"

They were immediately profoundly still, for they felt how little, if any right they now had, after accepting his guidance, to endanger probably his safety, by disputing his wishes in any particular.

It was soon manifest that, notwithstanding the rather uncomfortable repulse that the officers had met with, they did not intend to relinquish the pursuit easily. The sound of their horses' feet sounded sharply on the road.

"Follow!" said Claude's new friend.

By the dim light they saw him make for a large barn, a little to the right of the entrance to the farm-yard. By the flutter of garments of some one who stood there, they could see that some female was lending as much assistance as she could to the party. This female, whoever she was, opened the barn door, and in another moment they all rode in, and the door was closed. The darkness now in the barn was most intense. Indeed, it was that kind of darkness that novelists declare may be felt; but as we never found any place quite so dark as that, and as we are writing a veracious history, and not a novel, we can only say that the darkness in the barn was such that you could not see your hand before your face.

"Do not any of you speak again," said their new friend. "Leave all to me, and the best that can be done shall be done."

"We have faith," said Claude.

The barn-door was opened a short distance and then rapidly closed again. This was merely done for the purpose of allowing the stranger to pass out. Claude and his party were, however, so near the high-road, that, if anything in the shape of a parley should take place, they could not fail of hearing every word of it. Their situation was decidedly an uncomfortable one. They heard the sound of horses' feet suddenly cease, and then a voice cried in imperative accents—

"Halt! Hilloa! House here."

"Ees," said some one, "what *was* it?"

"Have you seen anybody pass here, my friend?" said the same voice that had cried "halt!"

"Ees," replied the other, "three men on 'osses. They went on fast enow, and nearly rode over me, 'cos, you see, I went to see what kind o' night it was."

"And they went on?"

"Ees."

"Thank you—Come on, comrades, we shall soon have them. They can't be far ahead of us, now. How do you get on with your wound, Davies—can you ride farther?"

"Oh yes—yes."

Away they went as hard as they could tear, helter skelter, and Claude

began to think the danger was past, but in this he was soon undeceived, for a loud strange voice cried suddenly—

“What is all this about? I heard somebody—padlock the gate, boy, and this 'un; and call Gregory: I'm sure some one is on the farm. Fetch me my gun—Stay, no.—Call Gregory, I'll get the gun!”

There was a scuffling of feet, and then the barn-door was opened again, and Claude's new friend popped in his head, saying—

“The officers have passed now.”

“Then,” said Claude, “I suppose we had better be off?”

“No.—No.”

“Think you not?”

“No. The officers upon not finding you, or any traces of you, a little further on, may retrace their steps again, and then a meeting would be perhaps something more than troublesome.”

“What do you advise?”

“That you stay here. The man who keeps this farm is no friend, and probably might be mischievous, so he must be duped as to the character of his guests. We will pass ourselves upon him for the officers. Come out of the barn. He will return directly.”

“But you have a friend here,” said Claude.

“Yes. The gate was opened by such. That friend, however, is not the master of the house.”

The little party now emerged from the barn, and then the new friend of Claude Duval called out in a loud voice—

“Hilloa! hilloa! Whose place is this? Is any one here? In the king's name, I demand assistance. Hilloa! hilloa!”

Lights flashed across the yard, and then the farmer, who had been for his gun, called out—

“What's all this racket about? Who be ye? I'll make a hole in thy carcass, danged if I don't.”

“Then you shall be hung on your own gate-post, my friend.”

“Eh?”

“Hung on your own gate-post, I said. We are officers of police, and if you make a fool of yourself, by any resistance to us, you will soon hear of it from the County Magistracy.”

“Why did thee not say that afore,” added the man, in a very mild sort of tone. “How be I to know? If so be, as you be officers, I'm sure I don't want to interfere. Bring a light, Gregory, and show the gentlemen into the house.”

“Come on,” whispered Claude's new and mysterious acquaintance to him. Come on, our only chance is to deceive this old curmudgeon, and if the officers should come back, we can, I think, stand a siege in this place for some time.”

Claude trotted his horse along the yard until they came to the porch of the farm-house, which was one of those ancient looking structures that are fast disappearing from the face of the land. A half-wild looking boy stood there with a lanthorn in his hand, and by his side was the farmer, an old crabbed-looking man, with dirty grey hair, and a face scored and puckered up into such a number of wrinkles, that it looked like some wonderfully intricate piece of network.

“Well, gentlemen,” he said, “walk in. What be the matter?”

“We are after the celebrated highwayman, “Claude Duval,” said the stranger.

“Dang it, don't I wish you could nab he.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes. Oh, I hate he.”

“I will get you,” said Claude, as he dismounted, and carefully helped Cicely from the saddle, “to be so good as to tell us the reason of that hatred, Mr. Farmer.”

"Oh, yes. I'll tell a. But—but—who——"

He was looking curiously at Cicely, and Claude felt it was quite necessary to say something to account for her delicate and debilitated appearance.

"This is a young gentleman," he said, "who was attacked by Claude Duval, and got hurt. We found him on the road, and, being bound to give him all the help we could, I put him on my horse."

"Ah!" said the farmer, shaking his head, "what a wagabone that highwayman fellow is. But there's an odd report about to-night, I can tell you."

"An odd report? What mean you?"

"Why, one of my men, who has come from Southall Market, says that Dick Turpin——"

"DARE-DEVIL DICK! the highwayman?" cried Claude.

"The very man. That he was seen last night in the neighbourhood on his black mare."

"I thought he never came so near London," said Claude.

"Sometimes," said Jack. "Don't you recollect his robbing Colonel Wood, near Croydon?"

"Oh, yes—yes. I heard of that."

"Gregory—Gregory. Take the osses," said the farmer.

A great hulking countryman approached, rubbing his eyes—for he had been, to his manifest discomfiture, awakened from a sound sleep, in a barn close at hand, the straw from which was sticking in a very picturesque way all about his hair and face.

"Ees, master, ees."

"Our stay here will be so short," said Claude's new friend, "that we will not trouble any one with our horses. Our friend here will look to them."

"Yes," said Jack, seeing that he was appealed to. "Yes, I prefer waiting here with the horses, and if this Mr. Gregory will bring some hay and a little water, it is all we shall want for the cattle."

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried the farmer, who was delighted at the idea that a feed of corn for each of the horses was not required. "Oh, yes—yes, all's right. That will do. You attend to he, Gregory."

"Ees, master. Ees."

Claude, with Cicely upon his arm, and their new friend following close behind, entered the farm-house. The knowledge that Jack remained behind with the horses, was a great thing towards the feeling of security that was so essential to their comfortable stay for any time in the farm-house, and so they all went into a room that was called the best parlour, and a couple of candles were lighted.

"Now, what will you have?" said the farmer.

"First of all," said Claude's new acquaintance, "who is in the house besides yourself and Gregory, and the boy?"

"Only my deaf housekeeper, Mrs. Williams, and she's a-bed long ago, she be."

"Well, tell this gentleman why you hate Claude Duval."

"Why, you see, he stopped me one night, and took £10 from me, and gave 'em to an old man as I'd turned away from my farm, cos why, he was past all sort of work, and what use was he to me? I never could catch the old man *arterwards*, or wouldn't I a persecuted him—ah, wouldn't I."

A shrill whistle at this moment sounded from without.

"That's Jack's whistle," said Claude.

"Ah! Then they are returning."

"I'll go and see," said the farmer, "I'll——"

"No, my friend," said the stranger, "you will not trouble yourself to do any such thing. Permit me——"

"What—what——"

The stranger took a rope from his pocket and began to tie the farmer's hands behind him, and as he did so, he said—

"This gentleman that you see there, in the boots, is Claude Duval. The

gentleman there in the shoes is a friend of his. The gentleman outside is another, and we mean to hold your farm to-night against all comers."

"And who be you?" said the farmer, his teeth chattering with terror.

"I'm Tom Smith."

The farmer looked about him with a bewildered air; and when Tom Smith, as he chose to call himself, opened suddenly the lid of one of the old-fashioned window seats, which were made of about the size of large trunks, and said—"Oblige me by stepping in here—"

He gave a howl of terror. Tom Smith took a pistol from his pocket and coolly shook the priming. Before, then, he could proceed further in his pretended proposition of shooting him, the farmer sprang into the window-box with the greatest agility,

While this little piece of comedy was going on, Claude and Cicely looked on with deep interest, and at its conclusion Claude said—

"What do you propose?"

"Listen to me," said Smith. "The fact is, that in a neighbourhood like this, and with a sick person, your only chance in the world is to throw the officers off the scent—to take to flight, encumbered as you are, will not do. Besides, if you were to stop to fight them, you could not kill enough of them to ensure your safety. I think, therefore, the best way will be to hold out here for a time, until we can send them off on a wrong scent, or play them some trick that may show itself as we go on. You hear that the house, now we have stowed away the farmer, is nearly untenanted, so what is to hinder us from taking possession of it, and playing the part of owners of it? I have one friend on the premises who will help us."

"I like the plan," said Claude; "and it will afford my young friend, here, an opportunity to lie down a little."

"Certainly."

Another sharp whistle from without showed that Jack felt that there was cause for alarm.

"Go," said Smith to Claude. "Go, and let the cattle be put in the stable, and bring your friend here,"

"I will."

"Oh, Claude, will you leave me?" said Cicely, in a low voice. "Will you let me be out of your sight again, now that we have, after so many dangers, met?"

"Do you mistrust me?" said Smith.

"Oh, no—no. But——"

"If you did, it is only natural that you should do so. Wait one moment."

He went to the door and called aloud. "Ann!—Ann!" and a young woman, with some degree of alarm depicted on her countenance, made her appearance.

"Ann," said Smith, "this lady (he had penetrated her disguise) wishes to rest a little. Do not be alarmed. A lady she is."

Cicely, having whispered a moment with Claude, left the room in company with Ann, while Claude departed to answer Jack's signal.

When Claude got outside, he found Jack in no little trepidation to see him.

"I thought," he said, "you would never come out, Claude. Don't you hear the officers coming up the lane?"

Claude listened, and heard both the sound of voices, and the tramp of horses' feet.

"Claude returned to the parlour, and was just in time to see Tom Smith equipping himself in a pair of top-boots and a smockfrock.

"Do as I am doing," said Smith. "We must make our appearance, as far as we can, correspond with our professions."

Claude saw the importance of putting some such a disguise over his regular apparel, and he immediately equipped himself. Jack then came in and was induced to do the same, so that they all three wore the appearance of respectable husbandmen.

"Now," said Tom Smith, "we will be three brothers. I am Tom. You, Claude, will be Bill, and your friend here, Jack."

"Now," said Claude, "as this is all your plan, Mr. Tom, we will, if you please, leave the whole management of it to you. Only tell us what we are to say, and how we are to play our parts."

"Circumstances only can guide us," said Smith. "At any time the horses can be saddled, and we can, I think, be off, but I hope we shall be able to do that and leave our enemies in not a very good condition to follow us. Ann! Ann!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anything to drink in the house?"

"Oh, yes, sir, some fine old ale."

"Good. If they resist that, they are wonderful officers indeed."

"Then you mean to ask them in?" said Claude.

"Yes, and my great hope is, that baffled, and tired, and hurt, as they are, they will not scruple to accept the polite invitation."

"Hush!" said Jack.

They all listened, and heard a loud knocking at the gate leading into the yard, and a voice shouting—

"House!—House!—Hilloa!—Is anybody up here?"

"I'll go," said Smith. "You two can stroll out quietly afterwards, and see how things are getting on."

With this Smith, or Tom, as it will be more convenient to call him in the scene which is about to ensue, went from the room, and Jack approached Claude, and said in a whisper—

"Do you trust him?"

"Yes, Jack, fully."

"Then I am satisfied."

"But remember, Jack, if you hear me say I wonder if the moon is yet up, you will understand that as a hint to get our horses out."

"Good—and Cicely?"

"I will take care to ascertain where she is, now at once. Ah, here is the young girl. Can you tell me in what room the lady is? I am her husband, Ann."

"If you will follow me, sir, I will show you."

Claude did so, and found that Cicely was lying down to rest in the room directly overhead, so that she could easily enough be communicated with. He kissed her cheek, saying—

"Dear Cicely, be under no alarm. All will be well."

"You say so, Claude," she replied, "and you will be near me, so all is well."

Feeling then that his presence down stairs might be required, he tore himself away, and descended the stairs. Jack was rather impatiently waiting for him.

"They are talking outside," he said, "but I did not like to go without you, Claude. Come at once, and let us hear what it is all about. This is rather a ticklish position I take it."

They both left the house, and upon reaching the court-yard they found Tom upon the point of opening the gate to about a dozen mounted men.

"Well, gentlemen," they heard Tom say, "you can make sure of him I should think to-morrow. He can't be far off."

"I don't know that," replied one of the horsemen. "Foiled we are, and there is no such thing as saying nay to that; but where he may be by to-morrow morning, I won't pretend to say."

"But at all events, we cannot do better than turn in for an hour or two to feed the horses and rest. There's rain coming on," said another, "don't you feel it?"

"And are we really to give it up as a bad job?" said a third.

"No, no, Jenkins," said the first speaker, "let Reed and Thompson keep

watch in the lane: we will not wait long. It's quite clear that for some particular object or another, Duval is lurking about this neighbourhood, but it would be sheer folly of us to go galloping, perhaps in the very contrary direction to which he has taken."

"Will you come in, then, gentlemen?" said Tom.

"Yes. Yes."

"The gate was swung open, and ten men on horseback came in, while the two underlings who were mentioned, kept watch in the lane, not over-well pleased, no doubt, to be exposed to the pelting of the rain, which was beginning to fall rather sharply, while the others of the party went into the farm house."

"Open the door, Bill," said Tom to Claude.

"Yes, Tom," said Claude.

"And Jack," added Tom, "get a drop of ale ready for these gentlemen, will you?"

"Yes, Tom."

"Are these your brothers?" said the principal officer.

"Yes, sir. Gregory! Gregory! Gregory! I say!"

"Oh, don't give yourself so much trouble. Of course you will understand that we pay for whatever we have, as we are upon the public service, and get it refunded to us again by the clerk of the peace, you know, so let our horses be well fed, and give us the best you have in the house, Master Farmer."

"Certainly, sir, and I only hope you will catch Claude Duval to-morrow. This way, gentlemen. Ah, it's a horrid thing to think that the highways are not safe. Suppose, now, I was coming home with the price of a score of sheep in my pocket, how unpleasant it would be to meet a fellow who would say "stand and deliver."

"Very. Very."

While Tom carried on this discourse with the chief officer, Gregory, the farming man, who had heard himself called in such stentorian accents, made his appearance again from the barn, where he had vainly hoped to get a little more sleep. At the sight of Tom, instead of his mates, his mouth opened quite wide, and he said—

"A man!—Who be ye?"

"Come, stupid," said Tom, "take these horses and give them a feed each, and a good one too."

"Eh!—Lor!—Who be ye?"

"Why really, Gregory," said Ann, stepping forward, with her apron over her head to protect her from the rain, "really Gregory, you will have to go back to the mad-house again—you don't seem to know your own mates."

"Mad—house—eh?"

"Poor fellow," said Tom to the chief officer, "he has been in a lunatic asylum once, and I fear will have to go in again, for at times, notwithstanding he was brought up with us, he don't know me or any of my brothers."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and then he generally speaks of some old man."

"Really!"

"Wher's the old man?" said Gregory. "I don't know ye, 'danged if I doos. Wher's the old man?"

"It's a pity," said Tom, "and enough to draw tears from a horse's hind leg; but the only thing that does him any good and brightens up his memory is this."

Tom as he spoke took from his pocket a coiled-up horse whip, and straightening it out, he gave Gregory a lash or two with it, that made him dance and roar like a bull.

"Do you know me now?" said Tom.

"Oh, ees—ees."

"Who am I—am I your master?"



Dare-Devil Dick and Claude Duval in Ambuscade in the Gravel Pit.

"Ees, ees, maister,—oh, dang it don't, and——"

"And do you know my two brothers, Bill and Jack?"

"No—I'm dang'd if I doos."

Slash went the whip.

"Murder, oh—oh, murder—Yes, I doos, Bill and Jack—and, yes, I knows anything now. Oh, oh, oh. Dang it if I ain't bewildered; and I shall have to say the Lord's prayer backwards, or raise the devil and axe him to unbewitch I. What will become of I?"

"You see what a poor fellow he is," said Tom.

"Oh, yes," replied the officer; "but what a cunning there is about mad folks, and the——"

"Oh, tremendous," said Tom, as he followed the officers into the house. "I and my brothers are going to Goodhall fair in the morning, if it is fine, so you see we are ready for the start."

Ann made herself quite busy and useful. Indeed but for her, Jack would have found no small difficulty in complying with Tom's orders about the ale, but she assisted him, and the table was soon respectably enough laid with a cold round of beef, a foaming tankard of ale, and some large wheaten loaves.

The officers did ample justice to the strong ale, and the eatables that were placed before them, so that Claude felt at each draught they indulged in from the ale flagons, that he was, in a manner of speaking, getting rid of a danger,

inasmuch as the larger the quantity of that pleasant, seductive fluid they imbibed, the less would they be in a condition to exercise that amount of judgment and discretion that was requisite in the circumstances they were placed in. Tom, who took the lead in what was doing, urged them, by a great many jocular inducements, not to spare the ale, and they, like men who had got thirsty by hard riding, certainly paid an amount of attention to it that was extraordinary. After a speech which made the officers all laugh, Tom left the room, and in a few moments his voice could be heard outside, shouting in a careless sort of way—

“Bill—Bill. The dun cow has got among the turnips. Bill—Bill, just come out a minute.”

“Your brother is calling you, I think,” said one of the officers to Claude.

“Is he?”

“Yes. I heard him,” said another.

“Excuse me, gentlemen, a moment then,” added Claude, and he at once left the room, and made his way to the farm-yard, where he found Tom Smith awaiting him.

“If anything is to be done,” said Tom, “now is the time.”

“Agreed,” said Claude. “What do you propose?”

“First, to let all their horses go. Come with me.”

Tom led the way through a stable to a small yard, along one side of which was a long manger, at which the horses of the officers were enjoying themselves, for Gregory had taken good care of them, and was there with a lantern.

“Gregory,” said Tom. “Have you any way of getting into the meadows from here, without going through the yard again, into the lane?”

“Ees there’s the little gate.”

“Good. Open it, Gregory.”

A gate was opened that led across a small ditch into the open fields, and far away in the dim obscurity of the night. It was just what Tom Smith wanted. He led the horses of the officers, one by one, through that gate, and with a lash to each of them with a heavy horsewhip which half-maddened them at the moment, he dismissed them into the open country, plunging and dashing on as though death were at their heels.

“That will do,” said Claude.

“I think so, now let us get our own steeds all ready saddled and bridled, and we will be off. Where’s Jack?”

“Waiting upon the officers.”

“Well, he must be got out.”

“And Cicely?”

“Who?”

“I have no secrets with you. She who is above stairs in male attire is my wife, Cicely.”

“She must and shall be well cared for. But how to get her down, is the mystery. Ah, whom have we here?”

“It is I,” said Ann.

“Then you have come in good time. Can you get the lady down here without passing through the supper room?”

“Oh, surely, sir. In a moment. There are three staircases to the old farm house, and she could get here two ways without going near the parlour.”

“All’s right then. Go for her at once.”

Claude waited in a state of feverish anxiety until Cicely made her appearance.

Tom was placing the bits in the horses’ mouths, for they had not been at all otherwise divested of their trappings, and in a few moments all was ready for a start, with the exception of getting Jack out of the supper-room. That, however, was not a matter of much difficulty, for the officers entertaining no suspicions, might just as well admit of an excuse for his absence as for Claude’s. The latter accordingly went to the door, and called aloud—

"Jack! Brother Jack, come here a moment."

"Don't you hear you are called?" said the chief officer to Jack.

"Am I, though?"

"Yes to be sure; your brother calls you. I dare say it's all about that d—d cow, that gives you no end of trouble. Ha!—ha!—ha!"

All the officers laughed as the principal one laughed at this sorry joke, and amid the explosion of merriment, Jack safely enough left the room, and hurried into the farm-yard.

"Claude?" he said.

"Yes, Jack, it is I. All's right. follow me."

"Yes, Claude; yes. Shall we escape?"

"I think so."

"And Cicely—what of her? Is she safe and better? How has the fatigue affected her, Claude? We must look to her comfort and safety above all things, you know, Caude."

"I thank you, Jack, from my heart, for those words. All is well, I think and hope. This way—this way."

A few moments brought them to where the horses were, and then Tom Smith, as he would call himself, took Claude aside, and said—

"Which, in your judgment, will be the best, to go away by this little gate leading to the fields, or by the high-road?"

"I should prefer the road," replied Claude, "simply because I have Cicely with me, and we may meet with obstacles the field way, that the horses, doubly loaded, might not be able to surmount: but then, again, the field way is the safest."

"It is. There are two enemies in that direction—I mean the road—and if they use fire-arms, the report may alarm our ale-drinking friends before we wish that they should find out anything is amiss."

"True. And yet, if I could but get Cicely to Ealing Common, she is safe."

"Indeed!"

"Yes: I have a friend there who will afford her a shelter, and then my mind would be at ease, come what might."

"Would it be prudent, think you, to go direct to your destination?"

"Perhaps scarcely so."

"Not at all, I think. No doubt all that road is well watched, and although, if you have a friend there that you feel you can rely upon, I would by all means advise you to lodge Cicely with that friend, I beg of you to make a detour in your progress there for safety sake."

"Your are right—you are right. I am not well acquainted with the country beyond Hanwell, but if you will be my guide, you will add much to the debt of gratitude we already owe you."

Claude's new friend, Tom Smith, willingly gave his assent to the proposition of becoming the guide of the party to Ealing Common. The next consideration—how to get Jack and Cicely away from the house, without creating any suspicion in the minds of the officers—was set about, and quickly arranged. At this moment, however, Ann was seen emerging from the house, leading Cicely by the hand. She was immediately taken in charge by Claude, who mounted his horse, and caused her to be placed behind him. The reader is aware that Jack was the last of the party below, who had been called out of the parlour on the frivolous pretence of looking after the cow, while attending to the comforts of the officers. After a short absence he reappeared amongst them; and on entering the room with a doleful countenance, he muttered—

"Confound the cow. You did well, my friends, to say she gave us no end of trouble. The beast is now trespassing on our neighbour's turnip-field, and you must excuse my absence while I get her out, as we like to do as we would be done by."

"Oh, certainly," said two of three of the officers at once; "don't mention it. Your kindness is so great, that we can readily excuse such a trifle as that."

"We are sorry, my friend, that you are compelled to leave us; but if you will procure us a little more of your sparkling old ale before you go, we shall be happy enough till we see you again."

After furnishing them with more ale, Jack placed his hat on his head, and quietly left the room. He soon joined the party in the yard, where his horse was in readiness for him. Having mounted, Tom Smith placed himself in front of the party, and said in a low tone—"Silence!"

He listened for a moment, and not hearing a sound except the cooing of the disturbed pigeons, he led the way to the gate by which they had entered. The road-way to it they had littered with straw, to prevent the noise of the horses' feet; and in a few minutes they were once more fairly on the road, in the wake of their mysterious new friend, Tom Smith, in whom the reader will not have failed by this time in recognising the notorious Dick Turpin, commonly called, "DARE-DEVIL DICK."

After progressing some distance, they turned into a by-lane leading in the direction of the Hanwell Road. Now the morning had made such progress, that in the open country all objects were distinctly visible, and the sky was of that dull leaden sort of colour peculiar to the early dawn before the sun has risen sufficiently to gild it with beauty; but in this lane, where were those in whose fortunes we are so deeply interested, the trees in many places met so completely overhead, that a darkness continued, which a mid-day sun could only convert into a dubious sort of twilight. Claude and his party were in one of those dark portions of the lane when thus questioned by the officers—

"Now, let us have a look at you!" said one of those men who had been left in the rain to keep watch and ward. He was closely followed by his companion.

"Look away," said Tom.

"We will trouble you to ride on to the next gap in the trees. This place is as dark as a dungeon."

"Very good," said Tom, "we will follow you."

A short canter brought them all to the gap in the trees which the officer had spoken of; and then he who had assumed the office of spokesman cast a scrutinising eye upon the party. It will be remembered that with the exception of Cicely they had each a smock frock and top-boots on.

"You may or may not be what you say," said the officer, "but it's my duty to—"

Before he could finish the sentence, a loud shout rent the air; and then a loud galloping of some approaching horses came clearly upon the ears of the whole party.

"My friend," said Tom, "we would gladly have given you the chance of getting out of this with whole bones; 'but needs must, you know, 'when the devil drives.'"

He made a clutch at the officer's throat as he spoke, and got hold of a cloth cape he wore, which being rather old and rotten, came away in his hand in a moment.

"Not quite so fast," said the officer, and drawing a pistol from his holster, he fired at Tom.

"A close touch!" said Tom, as snatching a pistol from his breast-pocket, he fired at the officer. The other officer tried to make off in the direction of the Farm House; but Claude, by a dexterous turn of his horse, intercepted him, and struck him down with a blow inflicted with the butt-end of a pistol. He who had been fired at by Tom, was hanging down upon his horse's neck, and the animal, terrified at the report, set off at full gallop.

"Forward!" cried Tom.

Both Claude and Jack gave their steeds the rein, and off they went like the wind. Tom kept the lead easily, although he was behind at the first part of the start. His horse actually sprang past the others in two prodigious leaps, and then it kept its place as easily as though it was merely taking a

pleasure canter. The lane was soon cleared, and then, Tom, waving his arm to intimate that they were to follow him, turned a little to the left, and soon emerged into the high road to Hanwell. Our friends were three-quarters of a mile a-head, when the officers, who had been played such a trick at the Farm House, appeared at the end of the lane, and all mounted too. How they came to be in such an efficient state for action, is soon told. When Tom and his friends had left the place, the fears of Gregory in a great measure subsided, and he not being quite so stupid as he looked, repaired at once to the parlour, and popped his head in, just as one of the officers, being attracted to do so by some hideous groans, had lifted up the lid of the window seat, and discovered the farmer.

"Hilloa!" cried Gregory, as soon as he saw his real master's head. "Here's the old man at last. Dang it, maister, where have you been?"

This produced an explanation. The officers found they were duped, but Gregory, placing his finger to the side of his nose, said—

"The osses bean't gone."

"Not gone, why you have just told us they were all started by those highwaymen. What do you mean?"

"This'en, maister. They was started, but it was only into the close paddock. They can't get out. He! he! who's a vool now, I wonders?"

Gregory was right. In the darkness, Tom nor Claude had been able to see exactly where the officers' horses went; and so, in lieu of sending them right away into the open country, they had only turned them out into a small two-acre paddock. Thus it was, that in the course of ten minutes, the officers—although some of them were not in the soberest condition—were all mounted again, and had in a helter skelter sort of way, taken to the lane, with a hope of speedily overtaking the fugitives. But this was a matter much more easily wished and attempted than performed, considering all things.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Tom and his friends being, as we have said, about three-quarters of a mile a-head of the officers, had very nearly reached Hanwell, while they were emerging from the outskirts of Ealing, so near together are those two pretty villages. Claude thought he might put a question to Tom.

"How far shall we pursue this road?" he said.

"Through Southall; and then, by the green lanes to the left, we can get round to Ealing again."

"That will do. What do you think of our friends, behind?"

"That they will remain behind, until we turn completely, as we shall do; and then they will be pursuing nothing, for we shall halt, I hope, while they continue their wild goose-chase upon the high road."

"I know not how to thank you."

"Pho! You may do as much, or more, for me some day."

"Are you, then, on the road?"

"Ha! ha! Well, sometimes I am. But is not this a fine bracing gallop. By Heavens, it does one's heart good to come over the country in this way. Out of the road, will you?"

This was said to a small market cart driver, who was plodding along to Southall Market, with a couple of pigs secured in the cart by a netting. Claude and Jack had room enough to pass on one side, and so would Tom, if he had moved to the other side, or paused a moment; but instead of doing either of those things, he said something to his horse, and in another moment the creature was over, cart, pigs, and all, and safely alighted upon the other side.

"Well done, my pet," said Tom, as he patted the neck of the noble creature he rode. "Well done, pet, though you have done better things than that."

"That horse," said Jack, "is the devil, or——"

"Or what?" said Claude.

"Never mind just now, Claude, we will speak of it another time; I have my own ideas about it. Push on. We are lagging behind don't you see. If we keep up this pace another two miles our cattle will be quite knocked up."

"I fear it. But only look at our friend's horse. It has not turned a hair, and it looks as fresh as if it had just trotted out of a meadow."

Obstacles, in the shape of market-carts, and, occasionally a wagon, now began to be in the way, for the market at Southall was a well-attended and popular one. To his dismay too—for Jack was, as we know, rather easily broken-spirited—he saw a flock of sheep about a quarter of a mile a-head. The mellifluous grunting of some pigs too, showed that some of the obstinate race were not far off. Still Tom upon his wonderful steed kept on; and as they neared the sheep, he cried—

"Keep to the right, and we shall pass them."

This was correct, for the man in charge of them was diligently collecting them upon the other side of the road. Claude got by, by a hair's breath almost without injuring any of the creatures. He had an almost superstitious love of animals, had Claude, and would at any time have run some amount of personal risk to avoid injuring one. Fortunately, the pigs had not yet reached the high road, but were just coming into it from a lane, so that the officers would encounter them immediately, although the fugitives narrowly escaped them.

"All right," cried Tom. "We shall have time to draw rein at the George Inn at Scuthgate, and take a glass of something as well as breathing our cattle. Here we are."

There was a sudden turn in the road, and then all at once they dashed into the pretty High Street of Southall, and Tom, as he said he would, drew rein opposite to the George Inn. Preparations for the market were going on all round the place, and indeed much of the stock had already arrived, so that there was the noise of a good deal of chaffering about the price of pigs, poultry, and cheese, going on already. The landlord of the George, hearing some horsemen pause at his door, came out with a smiling face; but the moment he saw Tom, he cried—

"Good God! You, and a market-day too!"

"Why not?" laughed Tom, "the more the merrier, you know. Let us each have a thimbleful of brandy." "And the horses?"

"We have not time. Nothing for them but the privilege of standing still for two minutes."

"What's that?" said Jack. "Which? which?"

"Those horsemen coming in the other direction to which we came. Is there a hunt here?"

About a score of men in red coats came trotting along, and Tom said, with an air of discomfiture, which, however, quickly vanished—

"Yes, by George, the harriers do meet to-day. Now if those idiots should take it into their heads to run us down—Humph! Well, we should have to show some sport, and at all events, whoever came near me, should, in a sense that he would not like, be in at the death!"

"But something must be done," said Jack.

"Of course it must. Here's the brandy. I drink to our further acquaintance, gentlemen."

"Can you," added Jack, "be so calm at such a moment of danger? Oh, Claude this is the end."

"Of what, Jack?" "Of your and my career. I will die with you."

"No, Jack, drink your brandy. Something seems to tell me that this is not the end. Tom, we are under your orders."

"Come on."

He who had called himself Tom, took the lead, and they followed him at a quick walk through the fair, for a fair it might almost be called, that populous market-day at Southall. In a few moments the little party, in the fate of which we are interested, was all but surrounded by the huntsmen. Their fate hung upon a thread. If they got clear of the men in red before the officers entered the High-Street and spread the alarm, the odds were in their favour, for it was not likely that those who came out dressed for a day's sport, would spoil it by turning aside for the purpose of lending their aid to police officers, although if Tom and his friends could be caught by the stretching out of a hand, it is possible enough caught they would have been. And now the greater number of the men in scarlet had been passed, and Tom was beginning to quicken his pace, when the officers came thundering into the market-place.

"Stop thieves! Highwaymen! Highwaymen!" they cried. "Stop them! There they go!"

"Now for it," cried Tom. "Tally-ho!"

He touched his steed with his heel, and it gave one of those terrific bounds that covered such an amazing stretch of ground, and then he took to a gallop.

Claude and Jack likewise pushed their steeds to their utmost speed, and off they all were. The officers did not pause, but dashing on, upsetting pigs, poultry, stalls, and everything in their way in their eagerness, they kept on crying—

"Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Two or three of the huntsmen, on the impulse of the moment, turned their horses' heads in the direction of the retreating party; but a second thought caused them laughingly to abandon the chase, and one said—

"Ten to four on the fellow with the black mare."

"Done," said another—"against who?"

"The field!"

"Done again! Ha, ha, ha. By Jove, he'll lead 'em a dance, Sir Harry, I think."

A quarter of a mile was passed over, when, directly in front of our party, from out of a lane to the right emerged five keepers or whippers-in, on horse-back, accompanied by a score of pointers. These men were not of the class that had allowed the chase to go on without interference; and when they heard the still repeated cries from the officers, or rather, from one of them, who seemed to have a throat of iron, of "Stop the highwaymen!—Stop them!—stop thieves!" they made a dash at the flying party. Tom stooped down to his saddle nearly, and catching the foremost of the men who tried to stop him by the knee, he dismounted him by a sleight-of hand that appeared quite marvellous.

"Forward," he shouted.

One man laid his hand upon the reins of Claude's horse, saying as he did so—

"I'll trouble you to stop, my fine fellow."

"The trouble's a pleasure," said Claude, and with his right hand he grasped the man by the throat with such a vice-like pressure that his face got black. The two horses flew along neck and neck for a few seconds, and then when Claude let the man go, he fell to the ground in a state of insensibility. The other three keepers dashed after the fugitives. The dogs followed them howling and yelping, so that the confusion upon the road, and the dust that was kicked up, was something tremendous, as the rain had not been sufficient to lay it thoroughly. Tom now, who was somewhat in advance, slackened his speed slightly, until the others were abreast of him, and then he said to Claude—

"This won't do, Duval."

"I know it."

"The turning to the left which we must take is close at hand. We must turn and fire."

"Very well. Jack, get your pistols ready." "All right."

"Give me one," said Cicely.

"My brave girl!" said Claude, "but—no, no,—you, at least, shall be out of these contests."

"Are you all ready?" said Tom. "Yes. Yes,"

"Then wheel round, and fire low."

Tom, nor Jack, nor Claude, saw Cicely reach out one of her hands and take a pistol from the left-hand holster of Claude's saddle, but she did so. In another moment the three horses faced their foes, instead of dashing from them. Bang! went four pistols as if they only made up one report. Two of the keepers were hit, and made such a howling that the very dogs were alarmed. One of the horses, too, was wounded and fell. The officers came on like an avalanche, and, unable to stop themselves, they dashed among the dogs, the wounded keepers and the half-maddened wounded horse, who in his struggles occupied nearly all the road, and over the most of them went sprawling, man and horse, making such a scrambling and tumult as ever was known. The two or three of the officers who were not mixed up in the *mêlée* drew up, and one cried aloud—

"For God's sake be off. I won't stir another step after you, Claude Duval. No, not if I live a hundred years." Another cried out,

"All I want to know, is, who that man or devil is, on the black mare."

"Ah," said Tom, "would you like to know?"

"We would! we would!"

He lifted off his hat and showed a slightly bald head, and singularly fine brow, as he said in a clear ringing voice—

"Folks that know me, and can take the liberty, call me DICK TURPIN, or DARE-DEVIL DICK!"

What pen shall picture the consternation of the officers—professional and amateur—to whom this sudden and most unexpected announcement was made; and at the same time we may add, what language would be sufficiently strong to depict the astonishment of Claude Duval and his friend Jack. The vague and undefined rumour that no less a personage than Turpin, who had achieved by that time a reputation only second to Claude's was in the neighbourhood, had certainly met Claude's ears, but that he had become his travelling companion he certainly had not suspected. Cicely, too, heard the announcement with conflicting feelings, for while she could not but admire the chivalrous spirit in which Dick Turpin had come to the aid of Claude, she feared much that his companionship would only tend to form another link in the chain of those seeming fascinations that held Claude to a career she could not but look upon with horror and loathing. However, that period of the absolute recognition of who and what their new acquaintance was, certainly did not present a favourable opportunity for reflection, as they were still in the greatest danger. Self-preservation was the dominant feeling in all their breasts, now, as they darted madly on.

"Forward! Forward!" cried Claude. "They will be on us soon."

"Yes," added Turpin, "it's a case of the devil take the hindmost now. Push on, all of you."

They did not require much pressing to do this, for putting aside every other consideration, Claude would have been cut to the heart if Dick Turpin had been captured while fighting so gallantly for him. They put spurs to their horses, and galloped like madmen. The officers were recovering from their pains, and a gentleman belonging to the hunting cavalcade, who although too much of a gentleman to join in the pursuit of the highwaymen without any personal provocation, nevertheless spoke his mind fully enough.

"If you are officers of the police," he said, "and let such a chance as the capture of two such men as Claude Duval and Dick Turpin slip through your fingers, you will deserve all the censure that can be heaped upon you."

"But what are we to do, sir?"

"After them!"

"Come on—come on! Oh, hear what this gentleman says, comrades. We must have them."

"Besides," added the gentleman, "they are but men, and their horses are but flesh and blood. If you keep up the chase, and get fresh cattle, as you easily can at every post-town you come to, you must run them down at last."

There was sound reason in all this, and the officers, to the number of nine, at once commenced the pursuit again with the viciousness that promised by no means an easy relinquishment of it. The little rest they had had, no doubt did the officers' horses some good, for they went off at a good pace now, and if we may have an opinion, we think that the danger of Claude Duval and his friends was much greater from those nine determined and angry officers than it had been from all the disorderly rabble that had been opposed to them in the Market Place of the old village of Southall. Dick Turpin turned his horse's head when they reached a piece of high ground, and looked wistfully towards the village.

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

"What is it?" said Claude.

"It is as I thought. The boldest of our foes will keep upon our track, and, unencumbered by the others, they will get on much better. Now for a race. Oh, if it was but night."

"Yes, said Claude, "that would indeed befriend us."

"What will become of us?" said Cicely.

"Nothing particular," said Dick. "On—on—on!"

He gave the reins to his beautiful steed and swept onwards like the wind. It was soon to be perceived that the horses of Claude and Jack could not keep up with the pace of Turpin's Black Bess, and Claude in a loud voice called to him—

"Don't pull in for us. We owe you many thanks already. Push on, and let us hope that some day we may meet again."

"Woa, Bess. Gently, lass, gently."

He turned and cantered back to the little party.

"What did you say just now about meeting again, Duval?"

"I saw that we were a clog upon your speed, and I begged you to leave us, at the same time that I expressed a hope that we might meet again."

"Pho! I am never in a hurry to leave good company. Introduce me."

"This, then, is my wife."

Turpin whistled, and looked surprised. He then lifted his hat respectfully to Cicely, and no doubt observing her confusion, he turned to Jack, and said—

"This is—is——"

"Sixteen-string Jack."

"What! Sixteen-string Jack! Oh, another—another."

"No. The only Sixteen-string Jack. The original."

"Who was hanged at Tyburn," added Jack, "Anno Domini seventeen——"

"Stop," said Dick Turpin. "Don't be joking till we get a rest. Come on. Don't you hear the horses' hoofs skurrying the road behind us, as if a lot of mad persons were at work? There's a gravel-pit near here. I have hidden in it twice, and without looking down it, my pursuers have ridden on, fancying me still upon the upper road."

"Will you chance it again?"

"Yes. If they do see us, we are not much the worse off, for they can only get at us by going round by the road-way, while we can scramble out of the pit by a path I know, and still have a good mile the start of them."

"A mile," said Claude, "is as good as a hundred. Come on."

They now reached a very singular bit of road. It was a cutting by the side of a precipitous kind of bank, upon the top of which the original road had evidently run, but no doubt, on account of its dangerous steepness, the lower road, as it was called, had been formed. Dick Turpin, to the surprise of Claude, took the upper one.

"This way," he said.

Claude and Jack followed him closely, and after proceeding about a hundred yards, he paused and dismounted.

"We must walk the cattle into the pit," he said. "We can easily get out of it mounted, if that is any consolation; but as I have a regard for my neck, considering it is the only one I have, I would rather go down this steep descent with my own feet beneath me than Black Bess's."

They all dismounted now, and Dick Turpin leading the way, while Cicely hung upon Claude's arm, they descended into one of the most singularly romantic places that they had ever beheld. At least, it was new to all but Dick Turpin, and he appeared quite familiar with its intricacies.

The rank and vile vegetation at the bottom of the pit was high enough to reach the girths of the horses, and here and there the animals smelt out a mouthful of sweet young grass, which they eagerly devoured, as no doubt it was deliciously cobbling to their mouths.

"We can get no further," said Dick, "without ascending, and that we don't want to do yet."

"Certainly not. Then this place has not been worked for a long time?"

"Not for sixty years. It was only a vein of gravel, and was soon used up. The excavation was then left. Rains and winds germinated and scattered seeds into it, and now you see it is quite a little wood, and any one not accustomed to it would find no small difficulty in threading its many winding intricate paths."

"Not a doubt but they would."

"Moreover, here and there, there are deep holes, which have been carelessly left, and at the bottom of which there is in all weathers and seasons water, and into which any unwary explorer might fall with but a poor chance of getting out again."

"Hush!" said Jack. "They come."

"Ah! so they do, indeed," said Dick Turpin, after listening for a few moments; "now absolute silence is requisite, for any sound from below here goes up the sides of the excavation, and is heard more clearly above than below."

The hard gallop of the approaching officers now came plainly upon the ears of the little party. Not a word was spoken. The caution of Dick Turpin was by no means thrown away, for whatever risks they might have felt disposed to run themselves, they had certainly no right in the world to tamper with his safety.

"The attention of them all was strictly directed to listening if the horsemen stopped, or continued proceeding at their maddening pace upon the lower road. On, on they came, and the gallop of nine horses made no inconsiderable tumult. On—yes—on—on. They pass—no—they pause—a loud voice cries 'halt.'"

"D--n them!" muttered Dick.

Claude spoke not a word.

"Halt!" again said the loud voice.

The horsemen paused. No longer could the sound of the fierce gallop be heard, but distinctly the laborious breathing of the horses came upon the ears of our adventurers, even distant as they were from the road where the officers paused.

"I don't hear them," they heard a voice say. Then another, "Not so loud, Griffiths,—if walls have ears, holes and corners in woods may likewise."

After this the consultation of the officers was carried on in a tone of voice which forbade the slightest word of it from reaching the ears of those in the gravel pit, who would have certainly been better pleased to have heard the whole of it. Dick Turpin placed his mouth close to Claude's ear as he said—

"Duval, this has been tried once too often."

"What? What?"

"Hiding here. They have been thrown off the scent before at this spot, and do you know it strikes me forcibly we shall have a run for it yet."

"I am sorry we kept not on the road then."

"Hush, man, hush, you speak an octave too high; whisper as low as you can. If we could have got the cattle to lie down it would have been better. Bess will do it at a word, but it is too late now, much too late."

"What is to be done then!"

"We must wait a little. We shall soon find what they are about. If they come down here—why, their fate be upon their own heads; but if they fire upon us from above, I, for one, will not be made an animated target of."

"Nor I."

"Then we must make a rush for it. Keep your party ready to mount at a moment's notice."

"I will."

Bang! went a pistol shot, and a rushing sound amid the branches of an alder-tree, close at hand, attested that the shot had come pretty near to the place of concealment of our party. Claude shifted his position so as completely to shield Cicely from any chance shot, and then he felt more satisfied, but was too intent upon shielding Cicely to notice that Jack took up a very similar position as regarded himself.

"Don't speak," again whispered Turpin. "They may not have seen us yet. We can be no judges down here of what sort of obstructions may be in the way of their seeing clearly into this dark excavation. The bough of a tree may screen us."

Claude and Jack both felt the truth of this, and were perfectly still as statues. Cicely trembled. In the course of a few moments another sharp crack proclaimed that a pistol shot was among them; but this time it did not come so near as before. They all breathed more freely.

"It's nonsense," they heard a voice say. "Come on."

"Nonsense or not nonsense I am going no farther," said some one in reply.

"No farther?"

"Not an inch. If you think you can find, and when found catch, you can do it. I am not in a condition to go further, nor my horse either. Don't you hear him blowing?"

"Who?"

"My horse, stupid."

The conversation ceased abruptly at this point; and Turpin once more inclining to Claude's ear, whispered—

"Do you think that little conversation was genuine, or only intended to deceive us,—possibly to our destruction?"

"I can hardly say."

"Nor I. I am in doubt. Let us listen for more."

Scarcely had he done speaking, when one of the previous voices again broke the silence, and the following conversation took place—

"And so you think it is of no use to go further in the chase?"

"Not a bit; it's all gammon. They are off and far by this time; at all events, I look upon it that there's an end to the whole matter."

"What will you do then?"

"Go back to the 'George' at Southall, and order a good dinner."

"Well, that ain't a bad idea. What say you all, gents, to it. Shall it be as Jones says, or shall we go on putting our heads into danger in looking after fellows who would just as soon put a bullet into us as eat a sandwich."

"Oh, let's be off," said a chorus of voices. "We have had quite enough of it. Better luck next time, that's all."

"Come along, then."

Apparently, off they all went at a trot, and while the sound of their horses' feet was still upon the air, Cicely spoke, saying—

"Oh, what a mercy this is."

Turpin shook his head.

"I don't mean to say that it is not a mercy, because that's all as it turns out; but if any of you here imagine those fellows are gone, in my humble judgment you will make a great mistake."

"That is my opinion likewise," said Claude. "The attempt to hoodwink us was too transparent. But we may talk a little freely, for they are with their horses."

"Nay, we cannot be too cautious," said Turpin. "Do you think it unlikely that they have left one of their number to listen if any sound should come up from this place?"

This was a supposition which was too natural not to place a restraint upon every tongue. Claude and Turpin only continued to converse in very cautious whispers.

"And so," said the former, "you think they suspect we are here?"

"I think they know it," but I will go and reconnoitre the enemy. Just be as still as you can until I come back."

"Shall I hold your horse?"

"No, thank you. Let her be. Bess, lass, Bess."

Dick Turpin placed his hand upon the shoulder of Black Bess, and gradually pressing upon it, the animal yielded, and lay quietly down upon the little grassy spot where they were all standing.

"She will not stir until my return," said Dick; "I won't be long gone."

Cautiously, now he crept away from them, stooping so low that he was quite hidden by the tall brushwood that grew in such profusion and luxuriance at the bottom of the excavation. After a long silence Cicely exclaimed,

"Oh, Claude, what will happen to you?"

"Nothing, dear one, nothing."

"Yes, but——"

"Nay, while you thus torment yourself with fears, you withdraw my attention from the means of safety. Hush!—what is that?"

"Only me," said Turpin. "The vagabonds are slipping quietly down into the excavation like Indians one after another. We shall have something to do with them yet, I think. The fools, we fight for our lives, they only for money. Ha! ha!"

CHAPTER L.

THE state of affairs was getting serious.

"Do you mean that they will actually venture to attack us?" whispered Claude to Turpin.

"Ay, do I, and from what I can hear, they have got something in the shape of a reinforcement, for there are two men with them, whom they address as gentlemen of the city militia."

"The city militia?"

"Yes; but I don't think we need put ourselves much out of the way concerning them, for I never yet heard that they were any very redoubtable warriors. I think, however, with all deference to you, Duval, as I know the locality hereabouts perfectly, you should give me full command over our party."

"Take it in the name of all that's fortunate," said Claude; "you may depend upon our following your directions in all things."

"Very good. Then you will remember that there are eleven men after us, and we are but three."

"Four to fight," said Cicely. "It is little that I can perhaps do, but that little I feel myself called upon to do by every principle of sound justice."

"Good," added Turpin; "mount then all of you, but take care to stoop so low down in your saddles, that your heads are not higher than those of your horses; and when I say 'Fire!' take care that you do so, and fire low, and the moment you have fired your pistols, give them the spur and rein, and follow me."

It was really an anxious moment now, for none of the fugitives could

exactly calculate either upon the mode of attack or the amount of valour and determination which would be brought to bear upon the affair by the officers; and likewise the two men mentioned as members of the City Militia, might be men of courage. It did not follow to the mind of Claude, that every soldier east of Temple Bar must be a Major Sturgeon. Duval could feel that Cicely trembled.

"Dear one," he said, "it is for you and you only that I feel deeply anxious. Let me implore you, if anything should happen to me, to go to London at once, and find out Mark Brereton (her brother) and May, (Claude's sister) and throw yourself upon their protection." [See "GENTLEMAN JACK."]

"No more, no more, Claude. Say no more in such a strain. I cannot, dare not, think of such contingences. You must not ask me to do so."

Duval was silent; but if anything could have nerved him to throw aside all feelings of hesitation, in opposing those who came against him, or regret for the necessity, perhaps, of taking their lives, it certainly was the conviction that if he fell, Cicely would be something worse than desolate. He closed his lips firmly, mumbling to himself—

"Let them come: it is their own selection."

And so, indeed, it was. If those officers sought, in a manner of speaking, to coin the blood of Claude Duval into gold, they had no right to expect that he should spare them, while they attempted to carry into effect such a process. But all time for reflection had now passed away.

"Steady!" said Turpin, in a low voice.

"Surrender in the king's name, or we will fire upon you!" cried one of the officers.

Probably they were alarmed at the profound stillness in that place, which they knew to be peopled by foes. No answer was returned. Turpin, from between his clenched teeth, uttered a low "Hush!"

"Once more, before we fire upon you," cried the voice again, "we call upon you to surrender! You must be killed if you are foolish enough to resist! Claude Duval, the game is up!"

"Fire low!" said Turpin.

Bang! went the pistols, as if all the triggers had been pulled by one finger, so simultaneous was the report. A shriek of pain mingled with the sound, and in another moment, obeying the furious injunctions of Turpin, they all darted to the right; but no sooner had they done so than a rattling discharge of pistols from the officers right into the spot they had occupied, convinced them how necessary it had been to leave it.

"Back again! cried Turpin. "Turn—turn! Back again!"

He was quickly obeyed; and then, in a voice that rang loud and clear in the pit, he shouted—"Forward!"

They dashed after him. The route which Dick Turpin took might well have appalled any one who for the first time looked upon it; for, to all appearance, it seemed as if he had an intention of clambering right up the face of the excavation. Now as that was, at the very least, some 200 feet in depth, any one might well be excused for looking upon it with a feeling of dismay. But, as the reader may suppose, Turpin knew better what he was about than to make any such wild attempt. The fact was, that there had existed an old cart track, by which the ground had been brought from the lowest part of the pit to the surface, and although that cart track had become very much grown over by weeds, yet it was there, and it was in pursuit of its windings that Turpin went. By keeping a light hand upon the near rein of his steed, there was little danger of its slipping off the road-way. If it had, instant destruction must have been the consequence; for nothing could have saved a fall to the very bottom of the pit. The speed, too, at which they went, was something in their favour; for it prevented the cattle from looking at their own perilous position; and so pursuing the zig-zag and circuitous route of this long-disused road, our party slowly worked its way towards the mouth of the deep excavation. Now, the officers were in what, in their own par-

lance, they would have called rather a fix. Two of their number had been killed outright by the pistol shots, and one was wounded. They saw their prey escaping, and there they were in a gravel-pit without horses, by the aid of which to follow upon their track, if they could have, after what had happened, summoned courage enough with a reduced force to do so. The two military men backed out of the fray. They were both as pale as death; and one of them said—

"We have given all the time we can to the affair, and must go now."

"Afraid by G—!" exclaimed one of the officers.

To this taunt the military men made no reply, but turning round, scrambled back again as quickly as they possibly could from the gravel-pit, with a profound hope of finding their horses, and being of an equally profound determination never again to interfere with highwaymen at bay.

"We have only one chance," cried the boldest of the officers.

"And what's that?" said another.

"Why to take up as good a position as we can here, and blaze away upon them. Who knows but we may hit our men yet, before they get out of the pit?"

This was certainly the very best thing for the accomplishment of their purpose that they could do; and as the others naturally fell into the opinion of him who chose, at such a moment, to take the lead, they all scrambled on to a little height, from which they could command a tolerable view of the fugitives amid the brushwood, and commenced firing upon them. Six men, none of whom were at all disabled, could manage to keep up a tolerably brisk fire with a pair of pistols each; and it was only a wonder that our friends did not suffer immediately from the discharge. Those who are acquainted with pistol shooting, however, know how many trivial circumstances and accidents will be sufficient, at any time, to prevent the success of a shot, especially in a strange place, and when the objects fired at are in motion. Each of the officers had fired twice, and yet there were the horsemen gaining rapidly the mouth of the excavation.

"Confound them!" cried he who had taken the lead. "Can we not hit horse or man?"

"It seems not," said another.

"Fire away! We can but try. Ah! there they are! By George they will give us the slip! Now is not that provoking?"

Even as he spoke, Dick Turpin, with his Black Bess, made one vigorous dash, and reached the summit of the excavation.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Come on."

The officers could hear the cheer.

"Fire upon him! Blaze away at the one on the top! There can't be a better mark! D—n the fellow! has he sold himself to the devil for the privilege of being shot-proof?"

Dick Turpin was sufficiently in advance of his friends that, as he stood upon the brink of the chasm, playing to them the part of a guide-post, the whole of the officers had a shot at him, and the whole of them missed him.

"Now what a set of rascals," he ejaculated, "to go blazing away at a man in that way! Why, Bess, if they had hit you, I'd go down among them, and sell my life for three or four of their's!"

As he spoke, he took from a pocket that would only just hold it, a particularly long-barrelled pistol. He fixed his eyes upon the officer who had taken the lead among his comrades.

"So," added Turpin, as he took deliberate aim at him, "you have fired at me twice, and you are, I suppose, what is called an active and enterprising officer. I will see if I cannot put an end to your activity and enterprise, my fine fellow."

In another moment he fired. A cry reached his ears, and the officer was gone. The bullet had hit him in the chest, and he had fallen to the ground among the brushwood.

"Done at last!" he said. "Oh God!"

The dying man fought the air with his hands for a few moments, and then a stream of blood came from his mouth, and his head fell forward upon his chest as though his neck had been suddenly broken. The officer was dead! No wonder his companions looked on with horror-struck wonder. No effort was made to stay the rapidly retreating fugitives. All spirit had gone from the hearts of the remaining officers, and with their dead, they remained in the gravel-pit, looking at each other with consternation upon every countenance. Surely the affair had turned out to be a very different one to what they had projected it should be. But not for long was this state of total inaction to continue with them. It so happened that the "gentlemen of the hunt," had by this time started a fox, and had got round to the meadows in the immediate neighbourhood of the gravel pit. There they lost the scent, for the fox took refuge in some secret covert, close to the pit; and the horsemen, some fourteen or fifteen in number, who had, with the utmost enthusiasm followed the dogs, assembled to consult about what was best to be done next, close to where the officers had left their horses. They had hardly had time to make a remark to each other about their disappointment, when the two members of the City Light-Horse arrived, and hastily mounting their horses, cried—

"Oh, gentlemen, there's a horrid murder taking place in the gravel-pit, down yonder."

Then, without waiting for a word in reply, they darted off as hard as they could to town.

"What is the meaning of all this, gentlemen?" said one of the "hunt." "Let us trot on and inquire. If we have lost the fox, we may find some other game."

"I'll be bound," said another, "that it's those highwaymen we saw at Southall." Saying which, he rode towards Turpin.

Dick saw that he was recognised by the "gentlemen of the hunt," and lifting his hat a little from his head, he cried in a voice that was quite loud enough to go across the pit—

"Hark away, gentleman! If your are inclined for a race, come on. We have not a bit more the start of you than we mean to keep.—Tally-ho!"

He only paused long enough to see that his taunt had had the effect of inducing the huntsmen to come after him, and then turning to Claude, he said—

"They are now upon our track, but a stern chase is indeed a long one; so let them come. Now for it—off and away, at once, for we must throw away no chances."

"But they are quite close to us," said Cicely.

"In appearance yes, but not in reality."

"How so?"

"Why, we are upon one side of the gravel-pit, and they are upon the other. It is three-quarters of a mile's ride to get round to this spot; and although it is not the odd quarter to come through the pit, I'll warrant, if they try that game, it will take them longer than it would to come round."

"Yes," said Claude, "we have as fair a start of them as we could desire. Calm yourself, Cicely, there is nothing to fear now, nor do I think there will be."

"You are right," said Turpin; "all we have to do is to push on until we reach some shelter, and then double upon our foes."

"Can we do so on this road?"

"Yes, easily. Ah! what is that?—Woa, Bess!—Woa, mare!"

A brilliant flash of lightning had suddenly lit up the whole scene with such a lurid glare that, passing, as it seemed to do, immediately before the faces of the horses, it alarmed them all; and it was some few moments even before Turpin could succeed in calming the terror of his exquisitely trained steed.

"A storm," said Claude, as he looked up.

"Yes, it's coming."

"But where's the thunder?" said Jack.

The inquiry had scarcely passed the lips of Jack, when the thunder came with such a startling explosion that it seemed as though a hundred field-pieces had been discharged at once in 'mid air.

"That is terrible," said Cicely.

The horses swerved and shook; but by voice and hand their riders strove to console and manage them so that they galloped on through the now rapidly darkening air, as though they had wings.

"Follow me," said Dick, "I see something like a homestead at some little distance."

Another flash of lightning, certainly not so brilliant as the former, and followed by a roar of thunder, that convinced Claude the storm was nearly overhead, accelerated their movements, for the natural result of this contention of the elements would be sure to be a fall of rain, which in Cicely's delicate state might do her much injury. As they proceeded across the meadow, Claude spoke to her in a low voice—

"Cicely, this is, indeed, hard fortune for you; but cheer up, dearest, and all shall yet be well."

A mute—but, oh! how eloquent—pressure of the hand was the only response. That slight touch was sufficient for Claude. It was such things that spoke to his heart, and told him how much he was beloved.

"Ah!" cried Turpin, suddenly, "I see chimney pots."

"Where—where?" cried Claude.

Turpin drew up, and pointed in the direction of a clump of trees, at about a couple of hundred yards distance; and there, sure enough, Claude saw some giant-looking, ornamental chimney-pots, lifting up their heads against the darkening sky.

"Alas!" said Cicely, who likewise saw them, "some lonely cottage would be a much more likely place in which we should find some shelter, than in such a home as, probably, lies embosomed among those trees. What think you, Claude?"

"I think with you, Cicely, that we shall find no welcome there."

"We can but reconnoitre the place," said Dick. "Do you know, it strikes me, that those chimney-pots belong to Bedella House."

"And what is that?"

"A deserted mansion, supposed to be haunted. They say no one has slept a night there since Queen Elizabeth ruled in England. But that to me is a very doubtful proposition, indeed."

"It will afford us a shelter, if one can gain admittance," said Claude, "against the weather, I suppose."

"Certainly it will. Let us push on for it. I see we shall have to cross another meadow. I hope we shall find a gap in the hedge, or a gate, for our cattle, I don't think, are in any humour for jumping just now, whatever they may be for a sharp run."

They reached the confines of the first meadow from the high road, and it was only, after skirting the hedge for some distance, that they came to a small gate, made for the convenience of cattle, through which they passed. And now the rain, that had been, as it were, only threatening, began in a very unequivocal manner to descend. The worst of the storm-clouds had, certainly, not broken over the spot upon which our adventurers were; but at times there would come such a dash of water against them, that it would really seem as if some one had deliberately cast it in their faces. Cicely shrunk closer to Claude.

"This is pleasant, indeed," said Dick Turpin, "and the worst of it is, it don't at all seem inclined to get any better. Come on, we can but try our luck at the old mansion. A roof over one's head, will be something to-day to boast of."



Grace Manning, rescued from her Cousin, takes leave of Cicely at the Farm-House.

"It will indeed," said Claude.

They had passed through the small cattle gate, into the second meadow; and as it was made narrower than the last, and they had but to cross it at its least dimensions, they soon reached an iron hurdle fence, which separated the actual grounds of the old house from the meadows. Jack dismounted, and quickly removed a couple of the hurdles, so that the horses could pass through with ease; and then upon all sides they could see what had been high culture, and abundant evidences of a carefully kept place. To be sure, the gravelled pathway was now almost completely overgrown by tall weeds, but still its devious course could be plainly enough traced; and some flower-roots that had grown wild and gigantic—losing much of their beauty, while they gained so much strength and freedom—looked strange and new to the eyes of our friends.

"This way, I think," said Claude.

"Yes, you are right," said Dick. "That leads evidently to the house. Ah, more thunder; did any one see the lightning?"

No one had; and from the character of the thunder it would seem as if the storm was going off in an easterly direction. The rain, however, although it still pursued its fitful varying character, became more annoying each moment.

"What a strange old pile," said Claude, as they advanced a few yards further, and, suddenly, upon rounding some laurel bushes of most luxuriant growth, came in front of the house.

Cicely thought it beautiful. That it was of the Elizabethan order of architecture could be seen, and that was all; for the whole face of the building, without exception, was completely overgrown by ivy. The windows were blocked up by the beautiful creepers, the doors were covered over, and it was only some few of the chimney pots that had escaped being covered. From want of care, too, hundreds of young green shoots of the ivy stood out from the house, waving about like so many green arms, that might be supposed to be either welcoming or warning off a visitor, as the fancy of those that looked at them might choose to dictate.

"Well," said Jack, "I think this is worth coming to see."

"And so do I," said Cicely.

"It is curious enough," said Turpin; "but now let us try if any one lives here, which I fancy, after all the show of its desertion, must be the case."

He hit heavily with his riding-whip upon the sill of one of the windows of the house; echo alone returned any answer to his blows. The darkness now was, for the time of day, something absolutely appalling; and the birds flew screaming by with terror, sufficiently manifest by the irregular manner of their flight. The horses snorted and pawed the ground with an impatient restlessness, while a strange moaning sound, from some gathering gale of wind, seldom heard upon shore, came mournfully and fitfully upon the ears of the little party, who stood apparently so fair a chance of being denied a shelter.

"I won't stand this," said Jack.

"Nor I," said Claude. "I will force an entrance."

"Ah, here is an old knocker," said Turpin. "By the lord they shall think a dozen London postmen are at the door."

The hard knocking of Turpin produced no effect whatever; although he repeated it twice.

"Well," said Claude, "what is to be done now?"

"I can hardly tell," replied Dick, "unless we can manage by our united force to break in one of the doors."

"I think we may do better than that," said Jack. "Skill to overcome an obstacle, I take it, is always better than force; and I have the means of opening, I am quite certain, some one door of this house, provided no one is within doors?"

CHAPTER LI.

JACK, with a picklock in his hand that he new well the use of, took his way to what appeared to be the principal door of the house, thinking that such was the most likely one by which the persons last occupying had left.

"Ah, that will do," cried Dick. "We shall get shelter now."

"No," said Jack, as he tried the lock, "no—yes—stop, yes.—It yields. It is only rusty, I suppose from long disuse, that is all. There it goes; now if this has been the last door opened, there are no bolts to it."

As he spoke he gave a push to the door, but although it was evidently not made fast by any legitimate means, something impeded its opening; and then, before Jack could make a surmise upon the subject, a gruff and somewhat surely voice, cried—

"What's the row now? Who's there?"

"Hilloa!" cried Dick, "we have roused up somebody at last. Push it open, Jack. Push it open."

Dick sprung at the door, and his strength united to Jack's, forced the door open, to the dstraint of a hulking ill-looking fellow in the hall, who had been striving to hold it shut, and who was fairly thrown down in the violence with which it was forced open.

"What do you mean by this?" he cried.

"Just what you see, my friend," said Dick.

"But this is not the way to come into an honest man's house.

"If it be an honest man's house," replied Dick, "it cannot be your's, so you have no cause for grumbling, for if nature took the trouble, my friend, to write rogue on any one's face, she did so upon your's. But, I suppose, you have been told that before, and if so, I beg to apologise for mentioning it to you."

The fellow, who was dressed in a half-gamekeeper half-ploughman sort of style, looked perfectly aghast at these words, as though in all his life no one had dared to be so impertinent to him.

"Come in—come in," cried Dick; "it's all right. Come in."

"Is it all right?" said the man.

"Yes, my friend. Quite so."

"Don't you make too sure of that."

The fellow advanced before Dick and barred the way, showing a frame of Herculean proportions, and a countenance of the most savage ferocity.

"I never say anything is all right," said Turpin, "unless I mean it; and now, bully, get out of the way."

"I won't."

"You won't?"

"I told you so; and if you don't be off, I'll soon make you."

Dick retreated a step; but it was only to get the fellow out from the doorway, and it had the effect, for the man supposing he had produced some effect from his threats, followed him closely and raised his arm. Dick, with a spring, closed upon him.

"Oh, that's it," said the fellow. "You want a fall, do you?"

"I have no objection, if you can give me one."

"Haven't you? then look to your neck."

"Keep off, Claude," cried Dick, as he saw Duval was about to interfere; "keep off. Let him alone. I can manage. Get inside all of you out of the rain. I'll come directly."

"Will you? Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the brutal fellow, as he clasped Dick in his arms. "Ha! ha! That's a hug!?"

"Is it," said Dick; "and that's a fall."

In an instant the fellow's legs flew up from under him, and he fell upon his head with a violence that left him insensible upon the ground for a few moments.

"Ah!" said Dick, as he shook himself and drew a long breath; "I thought that I could show you a dodge in wrestling, unless you had been to a better school than was likely to have had you for a pupil."

During the time of this brief contest, our friends had all taken refuge in the hall of the house, and then Dick joined them. The discomfited bully rose to a sitting posture and rubbed his head. He uttered some awful oaths.

"Silence!" cried Dick. "I won't have any swearing here."

The fellow was silent. He seemed to have a thorough dread of Dick, and slowly rising, he staggered into the hall, saying—

"If it's shelter you want, I haven't got no objection. Come in."

"Oh, you are disposed to be civil now, are you? If you had taken the same thought some time ago, you would have spared making that hole in the gravel there, outside the door, with your thick head."

"Oh master, let by-gones be by-gones," said the fellow, with a rough attempt at good humor, which sat most awkwardly upon him; "I don't bear any malice."

"Very well," said Dick. "Light us a fire then somewhere, and we will pay you for your trouble."

"This way master. I lives here, and takes care of the old house. I've got a bit of a fire here in one of the rooms. This way, master, if you please. This way—this way—to the small parlour—a-hem!"

The man bawled out these words so loud, that Dick said to him—

"What are you making all that noise about? We are none of us destitute of the sense of hearing, thank God."

"Did I speak loud, master?"

"Did you? To be sure you did."

"Ah, it's only one of my little funny ways, master, that's all. If you comes to know me, I'm full on 'em."

Claude took the opportunity of the fellow being a little in advance to whisper quietly to Dick Turpin.

"We had better be fully upon our guard with this fellow. I am quite convinced that he has confederates in the house, and that his loud talking was merely to give them a hint to keep out of the way while we went to the room he speaks of."

"I am of the same opinion."

"I thought you would be. Let us be careful."

"Yes, and keep close together."

The man suddenly turned, and said—

"You will excuse my being all of a muddle here, gentlemen, as I live all by myself, you see; and there ain't no women folks in the place to put it a bit to rights, you see. This is the room, master, if you pleases."

He called Dick master, and evidently stood in fear of him since the heavy fall he had had from Dick's superiority in the art of wrestling, in which skill is so superior to mere brute strength, for as regards the latter, the man could have eaten Dick up. They all followed him across a long hall, and through two empty rooms, and then down six steps into a small apartment that at one time had been a sort of waiting-room. There was no grate in the place usually so filled, but upon the hearth a wood fire was slowly burning. The smell of tobacco was powerful in the room. As regards furniture, there stood in the centre of the apartment a table which, from its shape, had evidently at one time been fixed to a wall, and in its best days had been, too, rather a gorgeous piece of furniture, for the legs of it were carved and gilt. Some chairs of all sorts and sizes, from the low *prie-Dieu* to the large old-fashioned arm-chair were there likewise, and they completed the furnishing of the room, for upon the floor there was nothing in the shape of a carpet.

"Sit down, and rest yourself," said the fellow. "There's plenty of seats, you see, master."

"Yes," said Dick, "and of all sorts. I suppose these came from some of the other rooms of the house?"

Oh, yes, master, there's no end of old traps in the place."

"Indeed. Is it furnished then?"

"Why, you may say it is, master."

"Who owns it?"

"The lawyer, old Griffiths, is the only one as I sees. He gives me, you see, a trifle to look after it, and keep the doors and windows shut."

"And you live here all alone?"

"Oh yes, master, all alone. I wander about a little, and looks after the garden, and so on; but as you say, master, I lives here all alone."

"A solitary sort of life."

"Oh, very, master, very. Would you like to take anything just to keep the damp out, master?"

"No," said Claude, quickly.

The fellow looked at him as though he would have said—"I did not ask you," but he suppressed the inclination to be uncivil and merely added—

"Perhaps you will, master, though, for all that."

"No," said Dick. "I don't drink anything before dinner. We will only wait till the rain has gone off a little, and then push on. You are sure you tied up the horses inside that porch, Jack?"

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "they are safe enough, and under cover, too. I think we had better go now. I don't hear the rain."

"Let us listen."

"I'll go and look out and see how the weather is," said the man.

Before they could have said a word in objection, the fellow left the room, and they heard him walking very quickly away.

"Dick, I don't like this place," said Claude. "Let us get out of it as soon as we possibly can. The rain without is better than danger within."

"I am of your opinion," said Turpin. "I feel as certain as I am of my own existence, that yon fellow is a scoundrel of the first-water. Ah! what's that?"

The door of the room was suddenly slammed, but it did not close perfectly. Some one uttered an imprecation on the outside, and when Dick Turpin and Claude both rose and made towards the door, they distinctly heard footsteps running from it at a hard rate.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Claude.

"Why," said Jack, "it just means that we should have been shut in here, if I had not, as we first came into the room, slipped the little bolt at the under part of the lock out. That, as you see, prevented the door from going close, and he who came to shut it was in too great a hurry to stay to see what the obstruction was."

"Confound his impudence," said Dick.

"Look to your pistols," cried Claude.

"Ay, we shall perhaps have a fight for it yet."

"When, oh, when will all this end?" said Cicely. "Oh, Claude, let us leave this place at once."

"Come on," said Jack. "This way to the outer door. This way. We ought to lose no time now. Up those steps. Don't you recollect now the way?"

They ascended the steps and rushed through the empty room to which they led. They reached the door of it—It was fast shut, and seemed as firm as a rock!

"Ah! we are caught!" said Dick.

"It looks like it," replied Jack.

"This is too ridiculous!" exclaimed Claude. "Yon rascal can hardly suppose that we are going to stand any of his nonsense, or that a closed door is to bar the way against three men."

As he spoke, Claude flung himself against the door vigorously, but the solid oak of which it was composed effectually resisted any effort of his to force it, and he was compelled to give up the attempt in some chagrin at its complete failure.

"Stop a bit," said Jack. "Here is something better. If I mistake not, this is a door, although well enough concealed for ordinary purposes in the panelling."

They all proceeded to the part of the room where Jack was, and there they saw sure enough that there was a door which had been at one time, after the house had been built, doubtless cut out of the panelling, so that moulding and all fitted tolerably exact, giving it the appearance as though it had been made for a concealed door, when, in all likelihood, no such notion was entertained by its architect.

"Is it fast?" said Claude.

"People who think themselves wonderfully clever," said Jack, "often neglect obvious precautions. This door is only locked, and now it is not even so well fastened as that."

As he spoke, he skillfully picked the lock of the door. A quantity of dust came from the top and sides of it, and they saw beyond it what at first appeared to be a most particularly gloomy passage.

"Come on," said Claude. "Let this lead to where it may it will be better policy to follow it than to remain where we are; for here in this room we were, no doubt, intended to remain, so that by leaving it we may defeat some plan or combination against us."

"What a gloomy place," said Turpin, as he drew a pistol from his pocket and shook the priming.

Claude had pushed on, and upon feeling the opposite wall, which was not above four feet from the door, that Jack had opened, he came upon some-

thing soft like cloth. Upon pushing more strongly, it yielded before him, and to the agreeable surprise of the whole party a door, covered with cloth and destitute of all fastenings, swung open, and admitted them into a spacious and most elegant apartment. Situated as this room was into which they now all made their way, it had, doubtless, at one time been the principal dining-room of the mansion. The walls were covered with faded tapestry. The ceiling was richly painted in arabesque, and the five windows were, in some of these compartments, fitted with crimson glass, that gave a sort of richness of coloring to everything within the apartment. One of these windows opened into a small conservatory. It would appear, that from this room some of the furniture of the apartment into which they had been shown by the man had been taken; for they saw in niches in the wall, several tables similar to the one they had noticed in what he called his room. A quantity of furniture, of one kind and another, was scattered about the place, but all in the most miserable state of disorder, and absolute dilapidation from sheer neglect. The dust lay upon some things like black snow.

"This is at all events," said Dick, as he glanced rapidly around him, "a change for the better, Claude. Do you not think it is?"

"I do," said Claude. "But you are right to be upon your guard, Turpin, and I will do the same."

Claude took the pistol upon which he knew he could most depend, from his breast-pocket, and carefully examined it to feel certain that it was in a state of efficiency for use.

"All's right!" he said.

"The best thing we can possibly do," said Jack, "is to make our way to our horses, and be off. The storm has abated, so I don't think we need wish to protract our stay here."

As though to give the most startling contradiction to the words of Jack, there came, at this moment, a clap of thunder that seemed as if it shook the house to its foundations. The echoes appeared perfectly interminable, and rolled and rattled about the wings of the building as though some wild animal was seeking admittance. Cicely clung to Claude's arm. Dick made his mouth up into a whistling expression; and Jack placed his hands over his ears to shut out the dismal and startling reverberations.

"Well," said Dick, "what do you think of that?"

"It was terrible," said Jack.

"It was, indeed," exclaimed Cicely; "oh, let us leave this place, for the very atmosphere is full of horrors. From the first moment I crossed the threshold, a shuddering feeling came over me, and it seemed as though a voice not of this world whispered to me, 'Turn and fly.'"

"My Cicely," said Claude, "you do, indeed, now allow your imagination to play with you."

"Well," said Dick, "I am not in love with the place, and storm or no storm, I am willing to leave it as soon as you like, Claude. Only say the word."

At this moment, when they were in a state of doubt and hesitation as to what to do, a door that they none of them had noticed, suddenly opened, and an old man with white hair, and quite a patriarchal look, made his appearance.

CHAPTER LII.

THEY all looked in astonishment at the old man, and the old man looked in astonishment, real or pretended, at them. For a few moments not a word was spoken on either side, and then Claude, advancing and adroitly placing himself between the old man and the door at which he had entered, said--

"Pray, sir, who are you?"

The old man made a kind of half-bow, as he replied—

"Really, gentlemen, I might, considering all things, ask that question of you."

"We were overtaken by the storm, that is all," said Claude, "and took shelter here, where we have encountered some strange treatment."

"Strange treatment, sir?"

"Yes, a man locked us in a room, with what intention is best known to himself."

"Alas! alas!"

"But we are prepared for anything, and if violence is the object, we are just about the worst people it could be tried upon."

"Dear! dear!" said the old man, as if in great grief. "Was the man tall, sir? and, though I say it perhaps who ought not, was he rather ill-favored?"

"Yes, tall," said Claude.

"And most decidedly ill-favored," said Dick.

"Then, gentlemen, I grieve to say it, instead of encountering me, you have unfortunately seen my poor deranged son."

"Deranged?"

"Yes, gentlemen; mad—quite mad. His manner is sometimes to strangers all courtesy, and he will declare, to the surprise and confusion of the people, that he has known them for years, and insist upon treating them as old acquaintances; and then at times he will be so rude and insolent, that people will fancy this rather a den of malefactors, than a peaceful old deserted house. Alas! alas!"

The old man wiped away a tear.

"This is extraordinary," said Dare-devil Dick.

"My poor, poor, boy," muttered the old man. "You see, gentlemen, if I did not live with him, who would?"

"But what do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Why, you see, sir," replied the old man, "the house now belongs to Colonel Vesey; and as I was many years with my old woman (rest her soul! she's gone now) in the service of the family, they gave us this house to live in, and what with the kitchen-garden, and the grapes the ladies used to take some of in the summer time, when they come to view the house, we did very well."

"And what brought your mad son here?"

"Alas, sir! he was in a lunatic asylum, but they said he was incurable, so we took him back to us, with the hope that love, with something like liberty, and old well-remembered faces about him, he would be a little better. Alas! alas! I think the sight of him hurried my poor wife, rest her soul! into the other world."

"This is melancholy," said Cicely.

"Yes, sir, it is. It is."

"And so," said Claude, "you live here all alone with the poor lunatic."

"I do, sir, I do. God help me!"

Conversation was now for a few moments put an end to by the rain, which came down so tremendously, and made such a clatter upon the glass roof of the conservatory close at hand, that it would have been difficult indeed for any one to make himself heard. Jack was the only one who had said nothing to the old man; but he was not an unobservant spectator of the interview between his friends and that venerable personage.

"It's coming now," said Dick, as he glanced through one of the windows. "It can't last long though at this rate."

"Impossible," said Claude; "it would be a second flood if it did."

"Pray, gentlemen," said the old man who had been wiping his eyes, and doing what he could to recover his composure, after conversing upon such a dismal subject as his mad son; "Pray, gentlemen, make yourselves at home here, I beg of you, as long as you like."

"Thank you."

"You need not at all hurry. I can find you clean seats in the drawing-room, for we keep that always in good order, for visitors you see, gentlemen; but this room has not been come into for I don't know when."

"Indeed?"

"No, gentlemen. But as I heard you here, I thought it was my duty to come and speak to you."

"You are very kind."

"Dear, dear, how the rain does come down to be sure. Please to follow me, gentlemen, and I will lead you to the drawing-room in a minute. This way, if you please, gentlemen, this way."

The old man led the way through a little ante-room; and then opening one of a pair of folding-doors, he said—

"That is the green drawing-room, which used to be the most favorite room in the house, they tell me, long, long, ago; and to tell the truth, it's quite a pleasant lightsome room, now."

The room into which they all entered fully merited the encomiums of the old man; and no one, to look at it, could doubt that it had been a favorite apartment. The walls of this drawing-room were hung with pale green damask; and what made that hanging much more estimable was, that it was not deformed by the odious figures with which old tapestry is mostly covered, presenting such vile and abominable imitations of humanity, as must be offensive to any one with the smallest pretensions to real taste. This tapestry had flowers richly embossed over its entire surface; and the roof of the room was painted so as to give by its shadowing an excellent appearance of a dome ceiling. The heavy and voluminous window curtains, the rich carpeting, and the covering of the old chairs and couches, were all of green silk worked with flowers, and similar to those upon the tapestry, so that there was quite a charming unity about the decorations of the place, which is as rare as it is really attractive.

"This is, indeed, a handsome room," said Claude.

"Very," said Dick; "and what a view."

They all went to the window, from whence there was a view into a garden, tolerably well kept.

"We are at the back of the house," said Claude.

"Yes," replied the old man. "The back contains all the principal rooms, as it looks to the south; and has a pleasanter aspect than the other portions of the mansion. Ah, gentlemen! will you excuse me?"

"For what?"

"For my great anxiety to look after my poor boy, which compels me to leave you by yourselves for a short time, if you will permit me to be so very rude."

"Certainly—certainly," said Dick. "Go, by all means."

"I will bring you a bottle of my poor wife's—rest her soul! she is dead and gone—ginger wine, gentlemen. It will keep the cold and damp out of your stomachs."

The old man, with looks of anxiety, left the drawing-room by another door, which he carefully closed after him.

"Poor old man," said Cicely. "What a cheerless life his must be; indeed, I pity him from my soul."

"You do?" said Jack.

"Yes; and do not you?"

They all looked at Jack, who had his finger upon his lip, as a sign of caution; and then he added, in a low tone—

"Does he not look venerable with his white hair?"

"Yes—yes," said they all.

"Hush!—hush! I——"

"What—what?"

"I saw it was a wig!"

They were all silent for a few moments, and then Jack added—

“Yes, a wig!—Actually, a wig! Now a man may wear a wig; but there is no occasion for his wearing a white one.”

“Not the least,” said Dick. “But are you sure, Jack?”

“I am.”

“Then he is an old rogue. By heavens! there was, at times, a something about his manner, that I did not like.”

“But what do you suspect?” said Cicely.

“Everything,” replied Jack.

“That is as vague as it is comprehensive.”

“Yes, but when a man disguises himself in such a way, it cannot be for a good purpose.”

“Let us search the room while he is gone,” said Claude Duval. “You see that odd stain on the carpet—what is it?”

There was a large stain upon the rich carpet, close to the table, that occupied the centre position in the room; and the more they all looked at it, the more suspicious they all thought it was, and yet could not tell what made it so, exactly. It is strange how the thoughts of several people will take one direction, and yet each dread as it were to be the one who shall become the actual exponent of the idea. Thus was it with our party as they looked upon the stains in the carpet. One and all, if they had spoken interrogatively upon the subject, would have said—

“It is blood?”

This was a word, however, that they each appeared to dread to give the slightest utterance to. Perhaps if the men had been alone they would have spoken firmly, but they none of them wished to alarm Cicely.

“It is—strange!” said Dick.

“Very,” said Claude.

“I think so, too,” said Jack.

This word “strange,” stood to them all in lieu of blood.

“Stop,” said Jack. “Before we search this room, let us see if we can in any way secure ourselves from interruption; I should think that these doors—and I see but two—have some mode of fastening.

He approached the doors and found that they were easily to be secured by little bolts. He did so, and they all began a vigorous search in the really magnificent room.

It was strange, very strange how suddenly, as it were, they should all be inclined to the opinion that something was to be found in that room, confirmatory of their suspicions that they were in anything but good company in that old uninhabited house; but such was the case.

Gradually, however, this notion weakened, as they found nothing upon which it could be fed.

They looked behind all the cumbrous pieces of furniture, and beneath all the tables that had covers, but they found nothing that could be construed into having the slightest suspicious tendency.

“Are we mistaken?” said Dick.

“No,” said Jack, “I’d lay my life we are not.”

“But candidly speaking now,” said Claude, “what is it that we suspect, and what is it that we expect to find by all this searching in holes and corners?”

“Don’t know,” said Jack as he pressed his hand upon his brow. “Call it superstition if you will, but I feel as though we were in this place surrounded by an atmosphere of murder.”

“Murder?”

“Yes, that is the word—murder!”

“Oh, horror!” exclaimed Cicely. “Is that the translation of all our thoughts? Let us fly from here, Claude. Let us fly at once. All the dangers of the road are as nothing compared to the uncertain and unknown horrors of this place.”

Claude drew a long breath.

"Cicely," he said. "Banish fear. I ask you as a favour to me, to permit that we stay and unravel this frightful mystery."

"Claude—Claude!"

"I for one," said Dick, "would stay; but as Cicely is with us, I think we all owe to her so much deference and courtesy as to leave the decision on her words entirely."

"I thank you," said Claude, "for those words."

"And I too thank you," said Cicely; "and when I beg that we go, believe me I please myself with the idea that I am perhaps doing you a service likewise, by removing you from this place."

Dick with a smile upon his face, was about to say something kind to Cicely, when they were startled by an exclamation from Jack, who had been diligently continuing the search in the room, by lifting up the tapestry that hung from the walls in different places, and carefully looking behind it.

"A cupboard!" he cried.

"A what?" Jack.

"A cupboard; and—and upon the threshold of it a—a—a—"

"A what?"

They all rushed to the spot.

"A pool of blood," said Jack, in a low deep voice. "Look at it. Can any one look upon those stains and for one moment doubt their origin?"

A feeling of thorough conviction that the stains were those of blood came over them all, and as they gazed at them a shuddering feeling of horror crept across their minds. If they had all spoken at once they would have said, with one voice—

"What is in the cupboard?"

Jack knew what they all meant by the expression upon their faces, and nodding his head, he said—

"We will see."

The cupboard-door yielded the moment a button was turned. It swung open; and slowly, with a hideous fall, the corpse of a murdered man, dabbled in gore, fell to their feet! Bang! bang! went some one's fist at one of the doors that Jack had fastened—bang! bang!

CHAPTER LIII.

CICELY did not shriek, but her eyes were fixed in horror upon the corpse which had fallen at their feet from the cupboard. It was at once the most awful proof that could have been tendered to them of all their worst suspicions regarding the place in which they were. No longer could Claude now doubt the fact; and, without heeding the knocking at the door, he said to Dick Turpin—

"Let us fight our way out of this place at once. The very air of it seems full of blood. It is a den of murderers."

Bang! bang! went the blows upon the door again.

"Who can that be?" said Dick; and then advancing to the door, but standing not in a line with it, for he knew not what amount of trickery might not be intended, he said, in a loud fearless voice—

"Who is there?"

"Fly!" said a voice from the other side of the door. "The officers of justice are at the great gate leading into the grounds, and they ask for persons such as ye are. Fly from here, and save yourselves."

"What shall we do?" said Dick in a whisper to Claude.

"Do you think the information regarding the officers is true?"

"I do; for how else could those people know anything of our being pursued at all? It must have some foundation."

"True—true. We have enemies, then, both within and without this place; but we will not shrink from any of them."

"What are you about to do?"

"Secure the one, for I don't think there are more, who is at this door. You may depend the great object is to get us out of this room, so as to avoid the chance of discovery we have already made."

"It may be so. But would you open the door?"

"Yes. Hark, what is that?"

The loud tingling of some heavy bell at a distance reached their ears, and the voice from the other side of the door cried—

"Open—open and follow me; I will lead you clear. The fact is, we are no better than we should be in this house, and I confess that we sometimes commit robbery; therefore if you are the persons sought for by the officers, we have a kind of fellow-feeling with you, and the sooner we can expedite you on your way the better we shall be pleased."

The mouth of the speaker of these words was very near the key-hole, so that they were all distinctly enough heard by our little party in the room. Suddenly, and without by a single word giving the man who was without the least idea of what he was about, Claude opened the door. The fellow half fell into the room, and Claude completed his entrance into it by seizing him by the head and dragging him completely across the threshold of it, while Jack closed the door again. This man was one whom they had not seen before, and he struggled with Claude fiercely, and actually succeeded in getting a knife from his pocket. He had, however, met with his master in regard to strength, for Claude clutched him by the throat and held him at arm's-length, until he got black in the face, and the knife dropped from his useless hand.

"Hold open the cupboard-door, Jack," cried Claude.

"Yes—yes."

"We will get rid, for the time present, of one of these rascals."

"And you could not put him into a more appropriate place," said Dick.

"Cram him in, Claude, and there is some company for him."

Not without a feeling of repugnance, Dick lifted the dead body by the clothes, and crammed it into the cupboard along with the half-strangled ruffian, and then Jack slammed the door and fastened it.

"Now then," said Dick. "It's off and away with us as soon as possible. Come on, and keep your arms in readiness, for I am getting more uneasy than I can well express about the horses."

"And I, too, feel somewhat more than uneasy about them," said Claude, "and would go through any danger to get at them. They are our only hope."

Cicely now crept close to Claude, and looked earnestly at him, as though she would have implored him not to fly into unnecessary danger for her sake; and he answered that look by whispering to her—

"Fear nothing, my Cicely; I feel convinced that we shall pass scatheless through this danger. My time has not yet come."

Cicely shuddered.

Those words, in their extended implication, might be a prophecy that his time was to come—a time at which he should die a death of violence.

"Are you ready?" said Dick.

"Yes."

"And your pistols well primed? A miss-fire might be our destruction now. We may have to fight our way."

"All ready," said Claude. "Lead on. I have an extra care, you know, here in Cicely."

"No," said Dick, "no. We will all perish rather than desert her, or permit a hair of her head to be injured. Yourself, Claude, cannot do more. Now, come on. You and I, Jack, will lead."

"No," said Jack. "Let Claude and Cicely be the main body. You take

the advance, and I will bring up the rear, for remember, that our foes are just as likely to strike from behind as in front."

"True—true. You are right, Jack. Keep a wary eye, and I fully believe, after all, that your post is the one of greatest danger."

All this passed very rapidly. Much of it was spoken simultaneously, so that not above a few moments were consumed in the arrangements before they left the room in which they had confined the living and the dead in the cupboard. Their great object was to get out of the house by the front, if possible, and so reach their horses, which, once obtained, they would find that their danger was not half what it now seemed. But that house had such a world of intricate passages about it, and so many windings and turnings, that it was next to impossible they should find their way easily. Perseverance, however, will do wonders; and if three men, with a brace of pistols each in their hands, and three such men too as our adventurers were, could not get out, any other persons might well indeed despair of doing so. Heaven only knows how many had so despaired in that haunt of the murderer; for that the house was a den of that description, there could be now no shadow of a doubt. Jack performed his duty as a rear-guard well; and as they passed a staircase he fancied he heard a shuffling noise, as if some person was hurriedly going up it. He had only just time to glance up, when, from a great height, there came down an immense feather bed. If it had fallen upon Claude and Cicely it must have struck them down, and then they might have become an easy prey. Two men ran partially down the staircase at the moment, but Jack had called out, "Forward—quick!" in good time, and Claude had caught Cicely round the waist and darted on a couple of yards, so that the bed fell between them and Jack. Turning then, he saw the two men descending the stairs; Jack and he both fired at once, and a loud cry of pain sufficiently testified that the shot had taken effect upon one of them.

"On—on," cried Dick. "I can see the conservatory, and our horses cannot be far off. This way—this way!"

Dick had opened a door which led into a very pretty, although small, apartment, at the further end of which was a glass door, most of the panes in which were exquisitely stained and wrought in flowered devices. Through this glass door a conservatory could be plainly seen, and the party now hurried forward full of the hope that it was the one not far from which they had tethered their horses. To their chagrin, however, when they reached it they found that it opened upon the back of the house instead of the front, and that they stood upon the verge of a large garden. Still they saw no enemies.

"We must have our cattle," said Dick, "and the easiest way will be now to get to the front of the house by the garden. Stay here, all of you, while I go upon the expedition."

"Nay, let me go," said Jack.

Dick shook his head.

"You would have a little more difficulty than you are aware of in getting Black Bess along," he said. "Your cattle probably have not been made such pets of, and will come with me; but my Bess is my friend and companion, and from the great indulgences she has had, is as self-willed as a spoilt girl."

He darted off as he spoke, and Jack then climbed up some iron lattice-work which was close to the conservatory, to get a good look about him, which otherwise was prevented by the mass of flowering shrubs that grew in great luxuriance around. They had all concluded, that if there were any officers in pursuit of them, that it was in the front of the house that they were to be found; but the moment Jack got a clear view over the shrubs, he cried to Claude, in a voice of alarm—

"By Heaven, they are here!"

"Who? Who?" said Claude.

"Our foes—the officers."

"No—no. Surely—"

He was up the lattice-work in a moment, and there he saw, over a portion of the garden-wall, a considerable distance from where he was, no less a number than half a-dozen men scrambling. From their appearance he had no doubt in the world that they were officers. The highwayman was quite as good a judge, in those days, of a Bow-street runner as the latter prided himself upon being of a highwayman. Two of them had dropped into the garden, and the other four were partly upon the wall, and partly in the act of dropping from it into a soft flower-bed that was at the foot.

"How easily they could be picked off," said Jack.

"They might, indeed."

"And yet it would look almost like murder, would it not, Jack?"

"It would be absolute murder, Claude. No—no. Let them attack us and get into a fair fight with us, and I would as soon put a bullet through one of them as look at him; but I must own I should not fancy firing at them as they are clinging to the wall."

"And yet," said Claude, with a sigh, "I doubt much if they would be one half so scrupulous towards us."

"Of course they would not. But let us think ourselves something better, Claude, although we are knights of the road, than thief-catchers."

"Thank the Fates, here is Dick Turpin with the horses all safe. At all events, that is something gained."

"It is everything," said Claude, as he sprang down from the lattice. "It is everything. Stay, Jack, and watch them a moment or two."

Jack remained upon the lattice watching the officers who were making so determined a descent into the garden of the house, while in a few words Claude managed to inform Dick Turpin of the state of affairs.

"So," said Dick, "they will fight it out with us at last, will they?"

"So it seems."

"Well, they must have their own way so far."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, as regards the fight. Here are the horses all safe and sound, but they would not have been so but for Bess."

"Indeed!"

"No. You will be amused to hear that when I got to the railing by the balcony to which we had secured them, I heard some one groaning and swearing alternately. Upon getting nearer, I saw, sitting upon the ground, about as disreputable a looking scoundrel as I ever looked upon. 'Hilloa,' I said, 'friend, what's the matter?'—'That mare,' he said, pointing to Bess, 'is a fiend in the shape of a horse.'—'Why so?'—'The devil kicked me.'—'Then you must have interfered with the devil,' said I.—'Yes,' he replied with ferocity, 'and if she had not kicked me in the extraordinary way she did—for, confound her, she twisted round to do it—I'd soon have cut off your retreat by securing your horses.'"

"Then we ran a risk, indeed," said Claude.

"We just did."

"What did you do with the rascal?"

"Oh, I only laughed at him and left him there. I think he was too much hurt to get up, to tell the truth."

"He deserves it."

"He does, indeed; but here are the horses all safe and sound, and refreshed, too. My advice is, that we had better go round the garden close to the wall, until we find some door, which we may be able to open and escape by. The vegetation, you see, is quite high enough to be above the horses' heads, although if we were to mount we should be above it."

"True—true."

"They are all over," said Jack.

"Which route do they take?"

"None at present; they are consulting about it."

"Then this is our time," said Dick. "When officers begin to consult, you are sure of some time before you. They are like a parcel of old women to talk. Each one will have his own opinion, resting upon some limited kind of experience he has had; and they will stick to it as distinctly as—the dence! What is that?"

A sharp crack sounded in the air; and something whistled over the heads of our little party.

"It sounds marvellously like a pistol bullet."

"They have seen us," said Dick.

"Then it must have been Jack holding on to the lattice. Let us shift our quarters, or we shall have a few more such messages; and if they only chance to fire a little lower they may chance to do some mischief to us."

"They may, indeed. Come on."

Turpin led his own mare, while Jack and Claude each led their respective steeds; Cicely kept close to Claude; and so at a very slow pace, and making not the slightest noise, they crept along in a flower-bed close under the garden wall, hoping to double upon the officers. They heard another pistol-shot discharged at the spot they had just quitted, and Dick muttered—

"I do think the muddy-fated rascals will let us fairly give them the slip, in this simple way, after all. There they go again. Come on a little faster."

CHAPTER LIV.

THEY quickened their pace. The soft ground of the flower bed upon which they trod still concealed all sound of the horses' feet, and Dick, who was foremost, looked carefully along the wall, with the hope of finding one of those doors which, for convenience, are commonly, at not very distant intervals, placed in the walls of very large gardens. None such appeared.

"Confound it," he said. "We shall get right round to the house again if we don't mind, and then there will be the devil to pay."

"The wall is high," said Claude, as he scanned it with his eyes.

"Ah," said Dick, "I know what you are thinking of; but it won't do. Bess knows what a jump is, but she could not clear that."

"So I was thinking."

"Stop," said Jack.

"What for?"

"I have an idea."

"Out with it, then," said Dick, with a smile; "I have no doubt it is a good one."

"This wall is of brick, and if you keep yourselves profoundly quiet I will endeavor, seeing the decayed state it is in, to pull down enough of it, with the assistance of my knife here, to enable the horses to get out of the garden; and if the hole is big enough for them, we will conclude it is for us."

"Good," said Dick.

"Yes, that will do," said Claude. "Work away, Jack."

"We will all work away," said Dick. "I happen to have a good large knife, that some folks would call a small cutlass, about me, and if it don't displace the old rotten brick-work quickly, I don't know what will."

"Claude! Claude!" said Cicely.

"What is it?"

"Look!"

She pointed in the direction of a large bush of variegated laurel which was not far off, and there he saw one of the officers holding back two of the boughs, while, upon his knees he glared at the party. The moment Claude saw him, the boughs collapsed again; and the man was gone, no doubt, to warn his comrades of where their prey was to be found.

"Did you see him?" said Claude to Dick.

The latter had a pistol in his hand, which he was presenting in the direction whence the man had disappeared, but he did not fire.

"It's a thousand to one," he said, "about killing him now. A leaf will turn a bullet in another direction, sometimes. We shall have to stand a siege."

"I fear we shall."

"Never mind. I like Jack's idea so well, that I think we may endure a few shots here, rather than not carry it out. Let us work away at the wall."

"Agreed.—Cicely?"

"Yes, Claude."

"Lie as flat upon the grass as you can, and you will be out of danger of any of those chance shots that may be whistling about our ears shortly."

Cicely flung herself, weeping, upon the little edging of grass that shielded the flower bed, upon which the horses had been walking and where they now stood.

"Be under no undue apprehension," added Claude. "All will be well. Stay, you may do us some service. As you lay you can hold the bridles of the three horses. There, that will leave us at liberty to work upon the wall."

By this time, Jack, who had let nothing disturb him from his operations upon the wall, had got out several bricks; and as the commencement of any operation of that nature is one-half the trouble, they went on capitally. They were not to escape, however, without some interruption. Suddenly they heard a voice say—

"Surrender in the king's name; or your deaths be upon your own heads."

"Hush; don't answer," said Claude. "Work away."

"We know you are on the other side of these laurels," added the voice; "and if you don't give yourselves up we will fire."

Not a word was spoken, and in the course of a minute or two more the same voice added—

"We are unwilling to shed blood, but we must and will take you all, alive or dead. Once more, as a last chance, will you surrender?"

There was no answer.

"Fire!" said a voice.

Both Claude and Dick stopped, and Jack darted aside, so that they escaped the bullets; but one of the horses was slightly wounded in the shoulder, and began to be restive in consequence.

"Confound it," said Dick. "I'd rather they hit me than Bess. Let us move the cattle on one side a little."

This was done, and hardly was it so, than Jack said in a low tone—

"All's right. I can see daylight through the wall now. We shall have it down by a good push."

"Think you so? Then here goes."

"All together," said Jack. "Now, Claude, push away. Once—twice—ah, there it goes. That will do."

A good portion of the old wall fell outwards, and immediately that it did so, Dick cried—

"Give them a volley. We owe it to them, and I really should not like to go away in their debt, even to the extent of a few lumps of lead."

They all three fired in the direction from whence the officers had discharged their pistols at them, and then, before even the smoke had cleared away, they fired again. A few dropping shots from the officers replied to this, and then a voice of a far different character to that which had spoken before, cried—

"Forward!"

In a moment, round the screen of laurel bushes rushed the officers, boldly determined to seize their prey.

"All's right," said Dick; "give it them."

He caught up a brick, and dashed it at the foremost officer, whom it hit in the face, and at once sent headlong to the earth insensible. A short but decisive contest now ensued. The officers grappled with their foes, but they

soon felt all the disadvantage of fighting with men whose lives hung upon the issue of the contest. One of them was felled to the ground by a blow upon the forehead, with the but-end of Claude's double-barrelled pistol. Dick threw one a tremendous fall upon the bricks, and Jack got another down, and was sawing away at his throat with the knife he had used to pull down the wall. It was lucky for this officer that his cravat was thick, and the knife blunt. In the course of three minutes our adventurers had all the field to themselves, and the only noise consisted of the shouts of murder from the officer Jack had got into so precarious a position.

"Let him go, Jack," said Claude.

"You rascal," said Jack, not hearing what was said to him. "You rascal—so you thought you would get the better of us, did you?"

"Oh! murder—murder!—mercy!"

"Mercy, you vagabond. I wonder what sort of mercy you would have had upon us? But I'll send your head to the Secretary of State, that I will."

"No, no, Jack; let him get up," said Claude, as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of his old companion.

Jack slowly arose. The officer would have done the same, but Claude gave him a look, as he said—"You had better not." And the man laid down again as flat as possible, looking as white as a sheet.

"Very well," said Jack. "The next time will do as well; and if I catch you again coming after us, off goes your head."

"I have had quite enough of it," said the officer. "I'll be off to London, and not trouble you any more, you may depend upon it, gentlemen."

"Now for it," said Dick.

They turned, and saw that he was mounted.

"Let's off and away," he added. "We have had too long a stay here already. Mount, and let us be off."

"And no one is hurt?" inquired Cicely.

"Not I," said Dick.

"Nor I," said Claude.

"Nor I," said Jack. "So we are all right, you see, after all, and have cleared the road too."

"I am sure we have," said Dick. "But what is to become of this house, and the scoundrels that live in it?"

"That ought to be seen to," said Claude. "Ah, I have it. Here, Mr. Officer, get up; I want to throw a little job in your way. Come here."

The officer was full of suspicions that some practical joke, of perhaps not a very pleasant character, was about to be played off upon him, and he only gave an odd sort of groan, as he replied—

"Thank you all the same, I'd rather lie down here till you are gone."

"Come here, I say."

"I won't look after you, gentlemen, indeed I won't."

"No mischief is intended you; I have only something to say to you. Come quickly or the consequences may be unpleasant, as we have no time now to throw away."

The officer thought it was best to comply. When he got close to Claude's horse, the latter said to him—

"This house is inhabited by murderers, who make a habit of waylaying persons who come to see it. You will find the corpse of one of their victims in a cupboard in a room hung with tapestry. I leave you to make of the information what you please. It is your business to see to it."

The officer looked aghast. Before he could say a word in reply, Claude, who had Cicely safely upon the horse with him, galloped away. He was closely followed by Jack and by Dick Turpin. They went on about a mile before they exchanged a word, and then Claude drew up and spoke to his friends.

"I must get back to Ealing Common."

"Well," said Dick, "this is not the way."



Dare-Devil Dick and his Friends in the Den of Bedella House.

"No," said Claude, glancing at the sun; "it is not, I can see; but can you tell me, as a last favor, of any near route to that place?"

"Last favor?"

"Yes, I feel that I and Cicely are but as clogs in your way. We lead you into all sorts of unprofitable adventures and dangers, distracting you from your pursuits; and we feel that we ought to bid you good-by with our best and most grateful thanks for the service you have done us."

"Oh, nonsense! I will see you safe to the common; as for fancying you are in any way indebted to me, don't think of it. Recollect, Claude, that we have one common enemy—the officers of the law; and that while contending with them, let the precise circumstances be what they may, I am fighting my own battles."

"To some extent, but——"

"Nay, now we will have no buts about it. Say no more upon this head; I am very well pleased to have made your acquaintance; and when you have placed her who, I do not wonder, is dearer to you than all the world beside or life itself, in a place of safety, I will bid you adieu; for the same road ought not to hold you and I. We should be too much for society."

"I thank you with all my heart."

"Come on, then: and as we trot gently down a lane here, which will lead us right, I will try and persuade you, Jack, to tell me more particularly how you escaped the—the gallows—that is the word, although it is an awkward one for gentlemen of our profession to utter."

Jack shuddered.

"Nay," said Dick, "if the theme be disagreeable to your feelings, say no more about it, Jack."

"No, no. There are people whom I feel that I can tell, and you are one of them; so you shall know all."

They now turned abruptly into a shady lane, that was entered close to some wheat-ricks, that cast a shadow over the mouth of it; and Jack was about to say something to Dick, when the sound of carriage-wheels came upon their ears.

"Ah!" said Dick, "do you hear that?"

"Yes," replied Claude; "it is in the lane, too."

"Ay, as luck will have it; and I don't see why I should not combine a little business with pleasure."

"You will stop it?" said Claude.

"Why, yes, I thought of doing so. If you have any objection, though, only say so, and I will let it go by at once. It don't much matter."

"Oh, no, now. I have no sort of objection, Dick. Business after all is business, and the world scarcely will give us any credit for forbearance. I take it."

"Forbearance? oh, dear, no; it is quite impossible, let us do what we may, that we can be so bad as the kind, good-natured world is willing to make us out. But here it comes: what a close affair."

"It is, indeed."

The carriage, that now appeared at the turn of the lane, was a chariot, the blinds of which were all closed. A postillion drove it, and it was as plain a coach as could possibly be. It came on at a good pace. The postillion, when he saw our party, waived his whip for them to let him have a clear road. This was not exactly what Dick purposed doing. On came the carriage at an accelerated speed, and the postillion, with gestures that betrayed more passion than prudence under the circumstances, again made signs he would ride over Dick, if he did not get out of the way. Turpin drew a pistol from his pocket, and shutting one eye as he presented it, he affected to be taking a deliberate aim at the postillion, who first decreased his speed—then stopped entirely—and at last slipped off his horse in the road, calling out as loudly as he could—

"Murder! murder! there's a highwayman with a pistol as long as my arm taking aim at me! I'm a dead man! I'm a dead man!"

CHAPTER LV.

"You will be a dead man if you don't stop that howling noise," said Dick, as he rode up to the carriage. The postillion was silent. Claude accompanied Dick towards the carriage, for although he looked upon it as Dick's affair, yet he thought there might possibly be some danger which he would willingly assist to get over. The postillion had now crept to the road-side, and there he sat trembling, it being quite evident that there was nothing to dread from him. The only thing that a little surprised Claude was that he kept saying—

"It will be all blown! It will be all blown! Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

What it was, in the peculiar parlance of the postillion, that was to be blown, Claude could not conceive, but he turned all his attention to the carriage, at the door of which was Dick, making ineffectual efforts to let down the blind, and see who was within the vehicle.

"They are shut up close enough," said Dick.

Scarcely had the words left his mouth than the blind was alertly let down from within, and to the surprise of both Dick and Claude there appeared at the window a young girl of such beauty and intelligence of feature, that for a few moments they could say nothing, so absorbed were they in contemplation of her exquisite countenance. The young creature was about fourteen or fifteen years of age. Her dark hair hung in masses upon her neck. Her complexion was the purest that could be imagined, and she had such liquid transparent blue eyes that it was truly ravishing to look upon them. And joined to this there was such an elegance of expression, that she fascinated them both beyond all power of withdrawing their eyes from so fair a vision. Truly, any one might have obtained an easy victory over them both at that moment, so completely thrown off their guard were they while in contemplation of that most lovely sight which God has given man the joy of looking upon—a young, beautiful, and innocent girl. A voice, however, from the interior of the carriage at once restored them to a consciousness of their position. The voice came from some one whom they could not see, inasmuch as the young girl blocked up the window. The ones were harsh and discordant.

"Say it! say it!" cried the voice.

The girl started.

"Yes—yes," she replied, "I will, Philip."

"Say it at once!" cried the voice.

"Gentlemen," said the young creature, addressing Claude and Dick, "gentlemen, I beg of you to allow me to proceed; I am going to visit a dying father. Oh, gentlemen, if you have any pity, let the carriage proceed. I do not know but this short delay may be the cause of imbittering my poor father's last moments, by denying him a sight of his child, and rendering me unhappy that I was too late to receive his blessing."

"Yes—yes. Oh, yes," said Claude.

"God will reward you."

"Hold!" said Dick.

"Nay, this must not be," said Claude. "Dick, you surprise me. You are not now acting in accordance with all I have heard, and all I know of you."

"Yes, I am, Claude."

"No—no."

"Yes, Claude, I am; do not prejudge me."

The young girl burst into tears, as clasping her hands, she said—

"Is there no feeling of pity in your breasts? Have you no compassion upon me? Oh, gentlemen, I pray you let me go."

"Do not fancy, my dear," said Dick, "that it is from want of feeling towards you that I detain you; I have a fancy to say a word or two to the gentleman that is with you in the carriage."

"No—no. Postillion drive on," said the voice.

"That he cannot conveniently do," said Dick; "Claude, remain where you are, while I go round to the other door."

"No—no," said the voice, again. "Murder! help!"

"Oh, have mercy upon him," said the girl. "He is my friend, now."

"Now," said Claude; "was he not always?"

"No—but—but he has repented."

"Ah!" said Dick, "I am glad to hear those words; I think I am upon the right scent; I thought I knew the voice of the person in the carriage; I will see if I know the face as well."

Dick had now got round the vehicle by the back, as being the nearer way, and notwithstanding some resistance from the inside, he wrenched the door open, and beheld a man fashionably dressed sitting in the carriage. The man tried to hide his face.

"Come," said Dick; "let me have a good look at you."

He forcibly turned the man's face round to the light, and then he added—

"So, it is you, Philip Manning. You rascal, what do you do here?"

"I—I—you—I—"

"Come—come, no stammering. Who is this young girl?"

"My cousin."

"Cousin?"

"Yes," said the young girl, "this is my cousin Philip. He is not a bad young man as he used to be, and my father has forgiven all, and trusted him to bring me home to the lodge."

"Trusted him?"

"Yes, oh yes; I pray you to let us proceed at once. Remember, gentlemen, that it is my dying father that I am hastening to see."

"My dear, what is your name?" said Dick.

"Grace Manning."

"And your father?"

"Is Judge Manning."

"And do you know, for a fact, that this man is your cousin?"

"Oh, yes—yes; my father has told me so often."

"That is good authority. It is true that this rascal, Phillip Manning, who is perfectly well known in London, always represented himself as the nephew of Judge Manning, but we never believed it. It seems, however, from what you say, that it must be true."

"Well," said the fellow, gathering courage, "what have you to say against it?"

"Nothing, Phillip. Do you know me?"

"I do not."

"Do you know Colonel Stillkey?"

"The devil!"

"No, not the devil, but Colonel Stillkey, to whom, you made, about a month ago, a certain proposition, which the colonel pulled your nose for insulting him by making. Perhaps, if you look at me more attentively, you will see some resemblance between me and the colonel whom you met at the hotel in St. James's."

"He—he—had a moustache."

"They are in my pocket."

"And lighter hair."

"The wig is in my travelling valise."

"Confusion!"

"Yes, Mr. Phillip, I think you have named it rightly; it is confusion to you rather, you unmitigated scoundrel."

"What is the meaning of all this?" said the young girl. "What is the meaning of it all? Oh, sir, will you not let us proceed?"

"Where, my dear, do you suppose you are going?" said Dick.

"To London, to my father's house."

"Well, London lies east of here, and you are travelling due west. Now, listen to me. This precious cousin Phillip of yours, is deceiving you. Your father is no more ill, in all likelihood, than I am, and this is a new scheme to take you away and secrete you somewhere. It's a providential thing that you found us, or rather that we found you."

"It's false," cried Phillip. "It's false, I say. The old man has been lying ill in his bed for a week; and only when he was given over, he sent me to bring him his child, and you would, for some base purposes of your own, binder me upon my errand of mercy and kindness."

"Ill in bed for a week?" said Dick, as he put his hand into his pocket. "Here is a newspaper, and under the date of only the day before yesterday there is a report of Judge Manning's speech at the opening of the sessions, at the Old Bailey."

Phillip fell back in the carriage with a groan. In his eagerness to lie with effect, he had, like most perverters of the truth, overshot the mark. The girl smiled through her tears, as she cried,—

"My father is not dying?"

"No, Miss Manning, certainly not."

"Phillip, how could you be so wicked?"

"Yes, you now see what a pretty rascal this cousin of yours is; and you see you have had a narrow escape."

"You are deceived, Grace," said Phillip. "This man, who has taken so much upon himself, is evidently, by his appearance, a highwayman."

"But he has saved me from you, Phillip."

What language could have conveyed such a world of reproach as these few simple words did! If the villain had any heart at all, it must have been deeply wounded at that moment. He shook for a moment or two as though he had been suddenly seized with the ague, and then he said—

"It is all false. All false."

"It is for you to decide," said Dick to Grace.

"Decide? Oh no, there is no decision wanted. The truth is manifest. Oh, sirs, protect me from this bad man."

"With our lives," said Dick. "Now, Mr. Phillip, I will trouble you to get out of this vehicle. You see how your fair young cousin shrinks from you. She feels that your touch is contamination."

"But——"

"Get out, I say; get out, or my method of compelling you may not be quite so gentle or so pleasant a one as you would like, Master Phillip,"

"Have mercy, I say—have mercy!"

"Get out!"

Phillip got out of the carriage, looking like some wretch who was condemned to death. The glance with which he regarded Dick had something in it that was essentially ridiculous, as fear in its more abject manifestations always is. He fell or flung himself to the ground. Dick Turpin stooped over him for a moment, and then, with an exertion of strength, such as one could hardly have looked for from him, he fairly lifted Mr. Phillip and flung him into a stagnant ditch, the surface of which was plentifully covered by duck-weed, and which was close to the side of the road. The shriek of the discomfited ruffian mingled with the loud splash which he made in the water; and there he lay floundering about, and from the slimy slippery character of the mud, in which he found himself engulfed, quite unable for a time to extricate himself. Dick turned all his attention to the young lady in the coach, and speaking to her in a kind tone of voice, he said—

"Now, my dear, where would you like to go?"

"Home—Home."

"But which? Back to the place which you call the Lodge, or home to your father?"

"To my father. I shall still be afraid of Phillip, if I go to the Lodge, for he may follow me there. Oh, you do not know how wicked he is, and how much I have had to forgive him."

"You can tell me nothing of his wickedness that I cannot fully believe. But will you trust yourself with us?"

"Yes—yes. Am I not much beholden to you?"

"But we are strangers."

"But you saved me from Phillip."

"Well, that is true. I will consult with my friends here, as to the best method of proceeding."

Dick turned to Claude, and said in a low voice—

"This young thing ought to be taken, for safety's sake, to her father, Judge Manning.—How can it be done?"

"He is the severest judge upon the bench, is he not?"

"Yes, and we will take a noble vengeance upon him, by restoring to him his only child."

"It is indeed a noble revenge."

"I knew you would agree with me in that."

"And I, too," said Cicely, who was just near enough to hear what they said, "I too, fully agree with you, and honor you for the feeling which has dictated those words"

"Thank you," said Dick. "But the means of carrying out this resolution, do not readily present themselves. What do you advise, Claude? I regret that some imperative business will prevent me from riding into London with the young creature."

"Then I will do it."

"You, Claude?"

"Yes, why not? Do you, Cicely, get into the carriage with the young girl. I will take the postillion's cap and jacket, and drive, while Jack follows on horseback leading my horse, who, as he has been for some time carrying double, will be glad of a rest."

"That will do," said Dick.

"And—and," interposed Cicely. "Do you think, Claude, you run no great risk?"

"In good truth, I think I run little, if any; I will first drive to the town at Ealing and lodge you in safety, after which I will take Grace to London."

CHAPTER LVI.

THIS was certainly not a bad plan of operation, although as regarded the latter portion of it, namely, the taking Grace Manning to London by Claude, very much could not be said for the safety of the proceeding. Claude, however, as the reader has long since discovered, was not one to allow himself to be turned from a purpose by considerations connected with his personal safety. He thought as little of the large rewards for his apprehension that were promulgated, as if no such sums of money had been in existence, and if he could but provide for the safety of Cicely, and then do a good turn to a young and innocent girl, he would be happy.

"That rascal, Phillip, though," said Dick, "must not know of the route we take, I will tie him with his face to the tree."

Dick turned and glanced at the ditch where he fully expected to see Phillip, but no Phillip was there.

"Hillio! Gone!"

"Who? Who," cried Claude.

"Why, that scoundrel, Phillip, to be sure."

"Jack, Jack," said Claude. "Why did you not look at him?"

"I—I, really," said Jack, "I was looking at what one so rarely sees, and yet what at the same time is the sweetest sight in all nature, the fresh, child-like, beautiful face of an ingenuous young girl, and I thought of nothing else in all the world."

"Oh, Jack Jack, you ought to be past all that."

"I hope when I am past all that," said Jack, "that I shall not have got past my grave, Claude. But this fellow must be near at hand."

"Surely, yes," said Dick.

As the latter spoke, he scrambled up the hedge, and took a long look around him. But no Phillip was to be seen, and what was, if possible, more provoking too, Claude suddenly called out—

"And where is the postillion?"

"What! is he gone?"

"Yes."

"Now," said Dick Turpin, shaking his head, "I call all this rank negligence upon our parts. It is too bad. Here, under our very eyes, two persons, with neither of them courage enough to stand up like men, have fairly given us the slip."

"I know the reason," said Cicely.

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Then pray favour us with it," said Claude. "I see you smile, so it cannot be a very serious one, Cicely. What is it?"

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you; but the fact is, if the blind of the carriage window had been up, and neither of you had been able to take repeated glances at the, I will own, beautiful and engaging face of Grace Manning, you would have kept a far better guard upon your prisoners."

Claude and Dick glanced at each other.

"Guilty!" said Dick.

"Guilty!" said Claude.

Jack laughed as he said.

"Ah, Love's magic has, indeed, wrought. Come, let us search well for these fellows: they can't be far off. I will gallop down the lane this way, and one of you can take the other. I dare say we shall find them by a little perseverance."

The search was duly instituted, and although not a little perseverance was brought to bear upon it, not a vestige of either of the runaways could be found to reward it. This was especially provoking, inasmuch as yet complicated the whole affair, by rendering it probable that Phillip might attempt something to the discomfiture of the party; but Dick suddenly said—

"No; upon consideration, I do not see that we have much to dread; for when we come to consider the whole facts, we have no reason to believe that Phillip Manning or the postillion, either, have the smallest idea of who we really are."

"There is something in that," said Jack.

"Well, then," said Claude, "let us pursue our original intention. Are you all agreed to that?"

"Yes—yes."

"Then the sooner we carry it out the better. Cicely, get into the carriage at once; and if you see any occasion so to do, I would not hesitate to confide to Grace Manning that she is in company with one of her own sex."

"It will ease the girl's mind much, I am sure," said Cicely, "if I be at once allowed to do so, Claude."

"Then do so, in the name of Heaven. Tell her to respect your secret, as we are at some pains to protect her."

"I will—I will."

"But mind, Cicely, do not bother this young thing with more secrets than can be helped. She need not know to whom she owes her rescue. If she should, as most probably she will, ask who we are, give the general name of Smith to us all, and say we are private gentlemen merely."

"I will, Claude."

Cicely now made her way to the carriage, and at once got into it. At the sight of a young man, which Grace Manning took her to be, she slunk as far off as possible into a corner; but when Claude shut the door, Cicely took her hand, saying—

"Be not afraid of me, I am not what I seem."

"Oh, do not touch me—do not be as bad as Phillip, who would hold my hand while I loathed him."

"Nay, Grace, I am not a man. Look at me!"

Grace Manning looked long and earnestly in the face of Cicely, and then the soft, feminine, and the really beautiful features of Cicely presented themselves as convincing proof that it was a female with whom she conversed."

"Ah, this is joy," she said.

"You are satisfied?"

"I am—I am. You are like me—some persecuted girl?"

"I am the wife of him who will take you in honour and in safety to your own proper home," said Cicely.

"How can I thank you?"



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Grace threw herself into the arms of Cicely, but then rapidly extricating herself, with a blush, she said—

“I wish you had not this dress on.”

“My dear, Grace, will you in return, for all that my husband is doing for you, do me one favour?”

“Oh, yes—yes.”

“It is a very simple one. It is, merely, to abstain from asking me why I am thus disguised, and why I am not more communicative than I shall be respecting who and what we are. Will you promise me this much?”

“Yes, anything; and yet——”

“And yet, what, Grace?”

“I would fain, when I pray for the happiness of those who are dear me, know by what name to speak to God of you.”

There was something so unaffectedly sincere—something so—if we may be allowed the expression—serenely pious in the way in which the young creature spoke these few words, that Cicely was too deeply affected to answer them for some few moments. She could only turn aside her head and weep.

“Forgive me,” said Grace, “I have said something now to you that I ought not to have said. Can you forgive me?”

“Forgive? Ah, no! It is I who ought——”

She wept convulsively. Grace threw her arms round her, and implored her to be calm. She lavished the endearments upon her that were worth a kingdom. It was in the midst of this affecting scene that Claude came to the window of the chaise. He had, by the assistance of Jack and Turpin, made himself very well up, from their united valises, and looked like a respectable kind of groom, with a top coat on to keep out the cold.

“What has happened?” he said.

“Nothing—nothing,” said Cicely. “Only, Claude, you must do all you can for Grace, and preserve her from all danger.”

“That will I, as sure as my name is Smith!”

Claude placed an emphasis upon the name of Smith, to awaken Cicely to the imprudence of calling him Claude, and then he added—

“Compose yourself. I am going to mount and be off directly. Do you feel unwell, Cicely?”

“No—no. All is well—go on.”

Claude closed the door, and proceeded to depart with the chaise, containing two of the fairest and best of created beings. Claude's feelings were too much interested for the young creature, who had been rescued so opportunely from her rascally cousin, to permit him for a moment to shrink from the full carrying out of the project that had been agreed upon between him and Dick, for her restoration to her father; and yet, if we come to consider of it for a moment, we cannot fail to be struck by the enormous amount of risk he ran by so acting. He had to traverse a number of streets of the metropolis, where if it had only been for a moment whispered who he was, every arm would have been raised against him. Truly it required no small amount of chivalry of spirit to overcome such feelings as these. But first he meant to proceed to the farm-house, at Ealing Common, where he knew that a friendly welcome, for his sake at first, and afterwards he felt certain, it would grow into one for her own, awaited Cicely. When she should be in safety, he felt with how much more ease of mind and spirit he should be able to devote himself for a few hours to the service of Grace Manning; and after all it was only the work of a very few hours to place her upon her father's threshold. Dick had not yet parted with them, but he intended to do so now, as soon as they got within sight of the farm-house, which was to be the place of refuge of Cicely. Jack, as had been arranged, followed the carriage, leading Claude's horse, and mounted upon his own, while Dick rode on, as a sort of advance guard, about twenty yards in the van. They thus proceeded, until by driving tolerably quick, they came within sight, from a rising piece of ground, at the top of which Claude pulled up to allow the horses of the

carriage to take breath, of Ealing Common. Dick rode to the side of the carriage. "Farewell," he said.

Cicely put out her hand to shake hands with him; and Grace would do the same.

"We shall meet again," said Claude. "Perhaps."

"Nay, I feel assured we shall. Something seems to whisper to me, that you and I are yet to execute an exploit which will transcend all that has been done upon the road."

Dick waved his hand, and was gone. In another half hour, for in truth the Common was further off than it had seemed to be, Claude drew up at the gate of the farm-house, which the reader is already acquainted with, and where Claude stopped a whole day once before. They did not know him in his disguise, but the moment they really became aware of who he was, their welcome was most cordial. A very few words sufficed to place Cicely quite at home here. Grace Manning alighted too, at the earnest request of Cicely, and partook of some refreshment at the farm; for she had travelled many miles now without having anything in the shape of food. After a time, Claude spoke to her—

"Will you trust yourself alone to my care?" he said, "I will take you safely to your father's house in London."

"Oh, yes, and yet, I—I——"

She glanced at Cicely, whom it was evident she would gladly have had the society of on the road, but Cicely shook her head, saying—

"I would, but I feel that I should only, perhaps, embarrass, where I would guard."

Grace Manning, young as she was, and all unskilled in the world's ways, could not but see that there was some mystery of a serious character about her new friends, but she forbore to make the slightest attempt to penetrate it; and she took a most affectionate leave of Cicely, with many expressed hopes of meeting her again upon some other, and perchance, happier occasion. Then as the long shadows of the trees proclaimed the decline of that busy day, Claude once more mounted one of the horses, and drove off with Grace for London. A feeling of gloom, which some more superstitious minds than Claude's would soon have made into a presentment of danger, slowly crept over him; but yet it had not the most distant power over his intention to persevere in the restoration of Grace to her father. The more he had seen of the manner and feelings of that young creature, the more she had won upon his esteem.

"No," he said to himself. "I will not allow a few gloomy fancies to turn me aside from an act which will be a source of pleasurable thoughts to me while I live—I will persevere."

It was full of such thoughts that Claude reached the top of Oxford street, and heard the din and bustle of the mighty city, in which he had so many enemies.

"Truly," he thought, "I shall owe my safety, I think, principally to the fact, that no one will believe, that I could think of coming here; and if any one sufficiently familiar with my features to pronounce a judgment upon them, were to see me, they would mistrust that judgment."

Claude was tolerably right. The very outrageous audacity of some undertakings protects the author of them. The lamps—miserable oil substitute for the present glories of gas—were all lighted in Oxford street by this time, and as Claude rattled along he could see the tradesmen in their shops, lighting up for their evening display; while the streets were each moment getting more and more thronged. Among all the faces that flitted past him, he knew not one; and it was a satisfaction to him to observe that the carriage which he drove only excited an ordinary share of observation. This convinced him that his disguise was tolerably perfect, and that by night it

would pass very well. Had it been daylight when he got into London, he certainly would have run a much greater risk. Once, and once only, an uneasy feeling of suspicion that something might be amiss, came across his mind; as a close chaise suddenly darted down a street to the right at a rapid pace, the driver of which appeared to regard him with unusual earnestness. Claude soon recovered from the slight shock this gave him, and he smiled to himself as he said—

“Truly our fears are the scarecrows that conjure up spirits to attack us at every turn.”

CHAPTER LVII.

THERE must have been some sort of entertainment at one of the houses in the immediate vicinity of where he was going; for there was a great concourse of carriages, and he saw many men and boys dashing about with links in the restless and disorderly manner incidental to such men, and such boys. The additional care he was compelled to take in driving, very likely had the effect of distancing from his mind more uncomfortable topics. As he neared the square in which Judge Manning resided, he found the throng and confusion to increase, and as he had forgotten the number of the house where the judge resided, he drew up close to the iron-railings of the centre garden of the square where there was the least tumult; and having dismounted he approached the carriage door to speak to Grace.

“I have forgotten the number,” he said, “of your father’s house.”

“It is forty,” she replied. “But you will know it by the first floor being adorned with columns.”

Claude looked about him. The only house so decorated was the one that was the very focus as it were of all the bustle and confusion. Its windows were a glare of light; and there was abundant evidences of its being at that time the centre of attraction in consequence of some *fête* or entertainment going on there.

“Look out for a moment,” said Claude.

She did so.

“Is that your father’s house?”

He pointed to the one where the lights blazed forth with so much brilliancy, and from which came the sounds of music.

“Ah, yes,” she replied, “it is—it is.”

“There is, it seems, something unusual going on. Shall I enquire? or will you have me to drive you to the door at once?”

“I have been thinking,” said Grace, kindly, “that my father might not wish that this affair should attain an undue publicity. He can punish my guilty cousin, without any but the members of our own family knowing aught of the circumstances.”

“You have but to decide,” said Claude, “what you would wish done, and I will do it for you, with the greatest pleasure.”

“And—and, besides, my father has many guests to-night,” she said, shrinkingly. “I would fain that by some less public means, than by entering his house, amid such a throng, he knew I was here.”

“That is not difficult,” said Claude.

“Is it not?”

“No. If you have courage to remain here for a short time, I will make my way to your father, and let him know all that has occurred, when he may take what steps he may think proper, in his wisdom, to get you into his house. Will that be the best way?”

“It will; but it is imposing on you so much trouble.”

“The trouble is nothing,” said Claude, with a smile. How truly he might have added—“But the danger is much.” He was too generous, however, to let Grace Manning know how much more she was indebted to him, for

such a service as he was rendering to her, than she would have been to any other person, upon whose existence no price had been set. There can be no doubt, but that in following out the impulses of his generous feelings in this adventure, Claude ran the greatest risks. But if a courage, as rare as it was admirable, would suffice to carry him through such an adventure, he would be carried through it safely.

"Be cautious," he said, as he closed the carriage door carefully. "Be cautious, I pray you, and speak to no one."

"Depend upon my caution, as you may upon my gratitude," replied Grace Manning, in a voice faltering from emotion.

Claude felt that he could not hope, without creating more observation than was at all desirable, to obtain an interview with Judge Manning in his present costume; but he was too much of an adept in changes of that sort, to suffer much difficulty upon that score. By taking off his great coat, which he flung over one of the horses, and making a few other trifling changes in his costume, he was able to look quite dressed enough not to be remarkable, although he certainly did not look as though he was attired for an entertainment. It was easier for a foot passenger than for one in a vehicle to get to the door of the judge's house. Claude soon succeeded in elbowing his way along, until he ascended the steps; and then accosting a powdered and bedizened flunkey, whom he saw lolling with some companions, he said--

"Are you the judge's servant?"

There was something in Claude's tone and manner which induced a respectful answer, when to any one else, probably, it would have been an insolent one.

"Yes, sir."

"Show me into a waiting-room, then, and let him know that a gentleman must see him on business of importance."

"The judge, sir, is very busy."

"Yes, I know."

"It is a party you see, sir?"

"Never mind that. My business will quite satisfy the judge, that I am justified in disturbing him. The world don't stand still because people have parties."

"My good, sir, will you step this way?"

Claude followed the footman, and was shown into a waiting-room close at hand. In another moment he was alone.

"How will all this end, now," he said to himself. "Shall I get clear of this most perilous adventure, or shall I by some cross accident find that by trying to do good I have brought upon myself evil? Well, well, we shall see. We shall see."

The room was well lighted, although not brilliantly, that is to say it was not lighted as though it formed any part of the fête, but only in the ordinary sufficient manner.

The door suddenly opened, and the servant who opened it announced the judge. Claude advanced towards him and bowed. He felt rather surprised that the judge did not, as a gentleman both by education and habits he must be, make the least show of returning the compliment.

"Well, sir," he merely said.

Indeed, thought Claude, this is not exactly the man whose feelings Grace need have been so very particular about sparing.

"It is of your daughter, sir, I come to speak," said Claude.

"Well, sir."

Claude was thunderstruck to find the indifference of the judge upon such a point; and for some moments he was silent. How very unworthy is this man, he thought, of such a child as Grace.

"Well, sir," repeated Judge Manning, with still more harshness and abruptness than before.

"Shame upon you, sir," said Claude, "that the name of your fair child does not call up gentler emotions. Were I the father of such a piece of gentleness and excellence as Grace Manning, and a stranger came to me with her name upon his lips, my tenderest feelings, my deepest anxieties would be raised. I am sorry that she has such a father."

The judge clutched the back of a chair for support; as in a voice that shook with passion, he said—

"Where is she? What do you demand?"

"Demand?"

"Yes, speak, ruffian, name the extent of your demand."

"Ruffian! How dare you?"

"Peace. No more of this. I know you, I say—I know you. You may well quail to find that it is so, and that by a circumstance quite sufficiently extraordinary to enable me to think it almost a kind interposition of Heaven, I know you, and therefore I say without further parley, how much do you demand, villain?"

"Sir, if you do know me, you may congratulate yourself upon knowing a more courteous, and possibly honester man than yourself."

"Dare you thus insult me!"

"Ay, I dare."

"In my own house?"

"Your own house? What is there in the atmosphere of your own house, I should like to know, that gives you a license to use intemperate language without the ordinary consequences? Tell me that."

"You incorrigible rascal."

"I am sorry to call the father of Grace Manning an ill-mannered old idiot," said Claude.

The judge sank into a chair as he said, in gasping tones—

"I thought I should be equal to this interview, but I am not. No, I am not. I feel that I am not."

"That is quite evident," said Claude.

"Torture me no more."

"Torture you? I torture you! Is this man mad?"

"You will drive me mad. What sum of money do you demand for the restoration of my child? Answer me that. Let your demand be not exorbitant and you shall have it."

"There is some horrible mistake here," said Claude. "Sir, the conviction is momentarily creeping over me that by some means, Heaven only knows how, we are at cross purposes."

"Cross purposes?"

"Yes, that is quite clear. I came here not without some risk, to do you a great service, and am met by personal abuse, and some of the strangest questions one man could put to another. You ask me to name a sum; I want no money of you."

"What do you want then?"

"To restore to you your daughter."

"Where is she? I demand to know where she is?"

"Stop," said Claude. "In the first place indulge me by briefly explaining to me who and what you take me to be."

"Read that, and tremble," said the judge, as he laid a crumpled note before Claude, who took it up and read it with astonishment. It was addressed to Phillip Manning, Esq., and was as follows—

"Sir—Knowing you as the nephew of the much respected Judge Manning, and knowing that, notwithstanding some wildness of behaviour incidental to youth, you entertain the greatest respect and love for your uncle, I apprise you of an affair that very nearly concerns his happiness.

"Some villains, by way of raising a sum of money, intend by a false tale of your illness, to get your cousin, Grace, to accompany them from her aunt's at the Lodge. They will hide her somewhere until your uncle's fears for her safety induce him to pay a large sum, literally, for her ransom.

"One of the gang will call upon your uncle this evening, to open the affair as regards the money. It is for you to take such steps, contingent upon this piece of intelligence as your affection for both your uncle and your cousin may dictate to you.

"You may rely upon the perfect authenticity of this intelligence.

"From your well-wisher,

"A. B. C.

"P. S.—Do not seek to know who I am, as the gang of rascals, whose proceedings in this case I inform you of, would murder me if they knew I had betrayed them."

"Now, sir," said the judge, when he saw that Claude had perused the letter, "Now, sir, are you convinced how far my knowledge extends?"

"I am astonished!"

"And you do not blush at your infamy? Alas! alas! My poor nephew upon the receipt of this letter, which was slipped into his hands in the street by a woman, who immediately fled, took horse and went to the Lodge. He was too late. Too late."

"Too late for what, sir?"

"To save my child. The villains had already got her away with them; and I—I.—But name your price."

"And your nephew, to-night, brought you this letter?"

"Only a quarter of an hour ago."

"Is he here?"

"He is; and I will confront you with him."

"Stop! hear my statement first. It was your nephew, Phillip, himself, who planned this abduction of your daughter. He, himself, is the writer of the dictator of this letter."

"Impossible!"

"Yet true. I rescued your daughter from his hands, at her own earnest, and imploring solicitation."

"I will have him here to confute you."

The judge rang the bell, and when an attendant appeared, he said—

"Tell Mr. Phillip that I want him."

"He is not within, sir,"

"Not within?"

"No, sir. He left the house about a quarter of an hour ago. Indeed, directly after he had seen you, sir."

"And left no message?"

"None, sir."

"Of course not," said Claude. "It would have transcended even his impertinence and assurance to have met me before you face to face."

"I cannot for a moment," said the judge, after ordering the servant to leave the room, "I cannot for a moment believe your statement. What proof can you bring me of it?"

"What proof has Phillip Manning brought you of his statement, sir?"

"Your presence here is amply sufficient."

"Well, thank God, I, too, have proof of the truth of my statement. Proof before which he would quail, and before which your scruples must vanish into thin air."

"What proof?"

"Your daughter's testimony."

"Ah! That indeed—but no—no—Phillip could not—dare not—"

"Suspend your judgment, sir. Close to the railings of the square garden, and a little to the left only of being exactly opposite to your house, is a plain brown travelling chaise. A greatcoat is thrown over one of the horses—in that chariot is your daughter."

"My Grace? My child?"

"Even so, sir. After rescuing her from Phillip, her worthy cousin, I only paused sufficiently long to enable her to take some refreshment at a farm—

house at Ealing, for she was faint and weary, and then I brought her direct to you. Send your servant to bring her here, and I will stand or fall by the statement the young lady may herself please to make."

The judge rang the bell violently, and several servants rushed into the room at once.

"My secretary!" he said. "My secretary!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE judge seemed to be quite exhausted by the violence of his emotions, after giving utterance to this order, and he sat in a large chair, looking as pale as death itself.

"The company, sir, ask for you," said a servant.

The judge only waved his arm, as though he would deprecate any attempt to withdraw him from the business he then had in hand, but the servant was not used to the language of signs, or he thought the entertainment that was going on above stairs was too important a matter to be disposed of by a wave of the hand, so with more pertinacity, he said—

"Sir, the saloons are full, and Lord John Muscle has twice asked for you, sir, if you please."

"Let him ask again. Begone!"

The servant retired, but those who had gone in search of the secretary presently announced Mr. Atkinson, who was the secretary in question.

A middle-aged respectable-looking man was this secretary, with a remarkably soft voice, and much suavity of manner.

"Atkinson," said the judge, speaking with difficulty on account of the deep emotion he was suffering under, "Atkinson, I am informed that Miss Manning is in a coach close at hand. Will you fetch her?"

"With the extremest pleasure, sir."

"Go, go—let no one know——"

"You will find the young lady," said Claude, "in a plain travelling chariot, without any arms upon it; and you will know it by a greatcoat being thrown over the off horse."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Atkinson, "this gentleman will accompany me?"

"No, no," said the judge.

"No," said Claude, "I am a sort of hostage or gage here for the truth of what I assert regarding the young lady being in the carriage at all."

Mr. Atkinson stared.

"But I am willing to be such bail for such a fact," added Claude; "and you will better please both me and the judge by being prompt in your mission, sir."

Mr. Atkinson left the room hastily.

"He will bring her in by the side door," said the judge, "which opens into the next street, if she be there to bring."

"She is there to bring," said Claude.

"Sir, if you should turn out to be right, I shall give you what reparation I can for my suspicions of you."

"And nothing for the service I have rendered you in rescuing your child from the hands of such a scoundrel as your nephew?"

"Oh, yes; much—much. Name the price, and I——"

"Price? Price? Really, my lord judge, you seem to think that all human nature may be bought and sold, and to subscribe to the doctrine that every man has his price."

"We will settle all this, sir, when Mr. Atkinson returns," said the judge. "Do not let us enter into what in either event must be a profitless discussion. If you have saved my child, you will find no occasion to taunt me

with any want of gratitude. If your statement on the other hand be untrue, your own imagination may depict to you what a father is likely to feel, and likely to do in consequence."

Claude slightly bowed, and then the conversation stopped.

The judge with difficulty rose, and proceeded towards a door opposite to that by which the room seemed to be generally entered. He opened this door and held it, partly for self support and partly to keep it open, as he said—

"This is the way, she will come. Of course if she be there at all, Atkinson will bring her at once to me. This is the way, she will come. Oh, God, if anything has really happened to my girl!"

The fatherly anxiety of the judge, and the evident affection with which he named his daughter made a favorable impression upon Claude, and quite effaced anything in the shape of irritation which his mind had felt upon the occasion of the few words that had passed between them.

"Be at ease, sir," he said. "All is well."

"I hope so."

"You may be assured so. Your child will be restored to your arms pure and spotless as when she left them."

"She is my only child, sir, and if anything were to happen to—but no, no, that is impossible."

He shrank back from the door, and again sank into a chair.

"I hear footsteps," he said.

"Then she comes," said Claude.

"I—I only hear the footsteps of one person, and they are not hers. Do you think, sir, a father's ear would not recognise the footsteps of his child?"

Claude approached the half open door. In another moment Mr. Atkinson appeared. Claude grasped him by the arm tightly, as he said, in loud clear accents.

"Miss Manning, sir? Where is she?"

"I only wish I had the supreme happiness of knowing. There is no such coach as you mention—no such horse with a greatcoat over him, and I grieve to say, no Miss Manning."

The judge uttered a deep groan.

"This is false," cried Claude. "It is too absurd. It is—is—good God—it is possible——"

"What is possible?" said the judge. "Speak now—speak. I command you to speak to me. What new horror would you suggest?"

"That your nephew, Philip, may have dogged your child and me to London, and while we were engaged in profitless discourse, he may have again seized her."

"Oh dear, oh dear," said the secretary, "that I should live to hear that. The blood of the Mannings, sir, would not stoop—could not bend down as it were, in a manner of speaking to——"

"This is trash!" said Claude, impatiently. "I will go and search for her myself. Do not despair, sir, I have promised, myself, to bring you your daughter, and I will keep my word."

Claude was moving towards the door, but the judge, rising with a sudden energy, cried in a fierce tone—

"Stop that man! Do not let him escape! Seize that man!"

"Is this possible?" said Claude.

"Stop him! Seize, I give him into custody!"

Claude had reached the door, when Atkinson shouted—

"Stop thief!"

Stung by the injustice that had been done him, Claude drew a pistol from his pocket, and cried—

"Take your reward for that cry."

He pulled the trigger, but the weapon was faithless. During his drive from Ealing the powder in the pan got scattered, and so Mr. Atkinson was

saved. It was the only weapon Claude had about him, for at that moment he recollected, with a pang of anguish, that he had placed his other pistols in the pocket of the greatcoat he had flung over the back of the horse.

"Ah, I am supremely fortunate," said Atkinson. "Stop thief!"

"Are you?" said Claude, as he flung the pistol in his face with a force that sent him reeling to the floor with an awful contusion upon his nose. "Are you. Let him who sets small value upon his life try to stop me!"

The cries of the judge, and of Atkinson, had by this time reached the saloons and the hall, so that Claude, when he gained the threshold of the room in which this singular conversation had taken place, found himself in the midst of a throng of persons.

With a conviction of his fate he said to himself in a low voice,—

"I am taken."

But it was only to himself that he made this remark, and not to his foes.

Dashing forward, he endeavoured to make his way through the throng of persons, for he felt that in so doing, upon the spur of the moment, lay his only chance of escape.

He was nearly successful, but in fighting his way he quite forgot that there was a rather steep step at the door. His foot slipped, and he fell.

In another moment he was a prisoner.

"Thank you, Phillip Manning," said Claude, bitterly to himself.

"Hold him tight—hold him," cried Atkinson. "Where's a constable? hold him tight. He seems a desperate fellow!"

Some half dozen men held Claude until a constable came up, who said in a voice of authority—

"What's the charge?"

"Felony!" cried a voice, and the old judge appeared in the hall. "You know me, officer?"

"Yes, your honor."

"Then I give this man in charge, and you will take him upon my personal responsibility?"

"Certainly, your honor!"

Claude was forcibly held, while a pair of handcuffs were put upon him, and then Atkinson coming up to him, said—

"I have the supreme satisfaction of congratulating myself upon the fact, that you will be hanged."

This remark of the vindictive secretary, certainly did not sound very pleasant in the ears of our hero, but it had not the effect of causing him to despond; he only nerved his soul for the coming struggle between himself and the law, and by the very recklessness of his daring long gave the lie to Mr. Atkinson's ill-boding prophecy.

On arriving at the lock-up, the following incidents took place:

"Hilloa! hilloa!" cried the night constable on duty; "what's the charge against this gentleman? Accommodate him with a seat."

Claude's appearance had had its effect, and the constable no doubt thought it was some street row or practical joke, concerning which, the distinguished-looking personage—for Claude was distinguished-looking—who was brought before him, was about to be charged with.

"Why, your worship," said one of the constables, "this ain't my charge, but Judge Manning has given the prisoner into custody, and desires he be kept fast, and he will make it all right."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, that's it, your worship."

CHAPTER LIX.

The night constable—who was called worship, from the same strained courtesy that folks in the House of Commons are called Honorable Members, or in the House of Lords, Noble Lords, or on thrones, miracles of beauty and virtue—turned a fierce look upon Claude, as he said—

“You ill-looking rascal, what have you been doing?”

Claude did not condescend to return any answer.

“What is your name, villain?”

“Don’t you know me, any of you?”

They all looked at him, and shook their heads.

“Will any one here give £500 for a knowledge of who I am? I will impart that knowledge to him secretly, and I don’t want to be paid immediately.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the night constable. “Ha! ha! That’s good. Oh, what a ruffian this must be, to make jokes in St. James’s watch-house, actually.”

“Well,” said Claude, “if you will persist in considering it merely as a joke, I cannot help it. You can have your own way.”

“Ah, my fine fellow, that’s just what we mean to have, and what we generally have. There’s no doubt you are a great rogue, or Judge Manning would not have taken the trouble to have anything to do with you. Ha! ha! You shall be put in the strong cell, my fine fellow. Jobkins! Jobkins!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Is the strong cell vacant?”

“Yes, sir. All’s right; but it lets in the water woundily.”

“That’s no matter. It’s refreshing. You will put this fellow in, and in the morning I will wait upon Judge Manning myself, and ascertain what he has done.”

This was certainly a novel mode of administering justice, to lock up a man in a strong cell over night, and then go in the morning to inquire what he had done; and, probably, even the non-astute mind of the night constable might have been a trifle shocked at so unusual a mode of doing business, had he not had the authority of a judge for it.

Mr. Jobkins, who was a great, hulking-looking, good-humoured fellow, with a face about the size and colour of a warming-pan, escorted Claude to the strong cell, according to the orders he had received that way tending.

That anything but desirable location was situated under ground, and reached by a descent of twelve steps. An iron door then opened, and then there were two steps more, after which the strong cell was gained.

It would have been more to the purpose if they had added another syllable to its name, and called the strong cell the strong cellar, for a cellar it was to all intents and purposes.

Now, Jobkins was kind in his way, and he said to Claude, as they descended the stairs together—

“I don’t know what you have done; but there’s no need that you should be more uncomfortable than needs be, I’ll take off your handcuffs for you.”

“Thank you,” said Claude, “thank you. I will remember this act of kindness, and it will go hard with me but some day I will find a means of requiting it.”

“Oh, that’s no matter.”

“Jobkins took off the handcuffs, adding, as he did so—

“If the cell ain’t strong enough to hold a man safe for a night without a pair of darbies on him, it ain’t no good at all.”

“That is true enough,” said Claude. “You spoke of it letting in water, did you not, my friend?”

“Yes I did, and not without reason too. Don’t you hear it.”

They both paused upon the threshold of the cell, and Claude heard quite distinctly the dripping of water.

"That's anything but pleasant," he said,

"Quite the reverse of pleasant," added Jobkins. "It's not common to put anybody in here at all, unless they have shown fight."

"How do you mean by showing fight?"

"Why made a row up stairs, and tried to get away, but you have not done that at all. Howsomever I suppose the night constable thinks he'll please the old judge by telling him in the morning what an amazing lot of care he took of you."

"Very likely."

Claude stepped into the cell. It felt sloppy under his feet, and a natural feeling of indignation arose in his mind at the idea of it being a part of the barbarous policy of the state, to confine prisoners in such unwholesome places, and that too before they were convicted of any offence against society.

"You stand still a bit," said Jobkins, "and I'll try to make the place a little more comfortable for you."

How he was to succeed in doing that, Claude could not divine, but he waited for about a quarter of an hour with patience. Then the door of the cell was opened, and a truss of straw was thrown in.

"All right," said Jobkins.

"Yes," said Claude. "Thank you, all is right as you say, and I am very much obliged to you, indeed."

"Don't mention it."

The cell was locked up, and Claude was alone.

Under the circumstances in which he now was, his reflections were not likely to be other than of the most painful character. In addition to the mental aggravation of being apprehended upon a charge of which he was most particularly innocent, he could not doubt but that upon his appearance in the morning at the police-office, some one would be able to recognise him; and in that event he would be at once hurried to Newgate, and his death determined upon as soon as possible.

When he came to consider, he much doubted if, even upon his recognition by any one, that person would get any reward, since he (Claude) was already in custody; but after all, that was a matter that did not much disturb him.

He began quite plainly to understand how the whole affair had been managed by Phillip Manning. That unscrupulous individual had got to town just a little before him (Claude) by some means, and prepossessed the mind of his uncle with the story that had induced the judge to give him (Claude) such a strange, and, at the time, incomprehensible reception.

Then Phillip had—probably by the assistance of some persons in his service, while he (Claude) was talking to the judge—left the house, and got possession of the young girl, and driven the chariot off with her.

And even amid all his own troubles, serious and affecting his life as they were, Claude felt heart-stricken at the idea of Grace Manning being in the hands and at the mercy of her abandoned cousin.

"And thus," he said, "for a time does wickedness triumph."

After a while he stirred himself to see if there were any means by which he could possibly escape from the cell. He tried the door; but destitute of implements as he there was, any attempt to force it would be utterly futile. The walls he struck in all parts; but from the dead sound they returned he felt certain that the cellar he was in was a mere excavation, and that all around him was solid earth, so that he could only hope that on the morrow something would turn up of an advantageous character, so as to induce the judge to side with a belief in his innocence before any discovery of who or what he really was could be made.

And Claude had some confidence in the usual stupidity of the police. He well knew their great anxiety to identify any one whom they were asked if they knew, and he likewise well knew how stupid they were at anything in the shape of recollection.

Of course, when he reasoned thus of the police, he excepted some of the old experienced Bow-street men, who, if they were to see him, would at once be able to name him.

Wearied with such agitations, and worn out by the great fatigues he had gone through for the last twenty four hours, Claude, at length, lay right in the centre of the truss of straw, that had been so kindly given to him by Jobkins, and fell fast asleep.

The probability is, that he enjoyed a far sounder repose than Phillip Manning, notwithstanding that villain had so successfully, for the time being, got the better of him, by fixing his own guilt upon his (Claude's) innocent shoulders.

Daylight at bright noon, and midnight, were alike in the strong cell of the St. James's watch-house.

Claude started, and rubbed his eyes, when some one called, "Hallo! hallo! —Get up, unless you are fond enough of the damp to lie here and rot."

It was not Jobkins who made this speech. Claude rose, and felt his limbs much stiffened by, no doubt, the damp air in which he had slept; before trying to turn his head he found that he had got that most unpleasant companion, a stiff neck. He could not help uttering a malediction upon the place.

"Ha! ha!" said the officer, who came to fetch him, "you don't seem to like it at all. But come on; it's time you made an appearance at the police office."

Claude did not condescend to make this man any answer, but followed him up the twelve steps.

It was broad daylight.

A tin mug, half full of water, and a lump of very brown, coarse looking bread was given to him for breakfast, and then he was permitted at a pump to wash his face and hands.

"Now, you rascal," said the night-constable, bustling up to him, "I have seen the judge."

"Have you?" said Claude. "Is he pretty well after it?"

"After what?"

"After the infliction of a visit from such an ass as you are."

The officers did not want to laugh; but they could not stand this, and a general roar testified their appreciation of the joke against the night-constable, who was not celebrated among them for any large amount of wisdom.

"You villain, do you dare to make a laughing-stock of me?"

"Oh, yes," said Claude.

"I wonder I don't knock you down."

"It's no wonder at all. The simple explanation is, that you are afraid to try it."

The night-constable looked ferocious; but he turned away, muttering to himself—

"If I can do you an ill turn, master, I will; you may make up your mind to that. I never was so insulted in all my life."

Claude felt that now was coming the time when he would have to run the risk of detection in his true character. He wished much to prolong the period during which he should be unknown; and he so disposed his hair, and the upper part of his clothing, that he looked as unlike what he usually looked as possible.

He thought it would be prudent to give some name to the magistrate, however; if he did not, he knew that the officers would all be put upon their mettle to find out who he was, and some one might make a shrewd guess, who otherwise might not have his attention directed towards him (Claude) at all.

Police vans were at that time things undreamt of, and the charges overnight at the various watch-houses of the metropolis, were taken through the streets properly ironed, and the procession headed by a couple of officers,

while two more brought up the rear; and in this way was Claude Duval conducted to Bow Street.

He had hoped that some other less conspicuous police office would have been chosen; but Bow Street it was.

His was not the first case called upon, but when he was conducted into the court, he saw Judge Manning on the bench talking to the magistrate. The judge, looked old and worn.

A general feeling of curiosity was manifest upon the countenances of all who were present, for it had got whispered about that the case was a curious one, and Claude found himself very uncomfortably the centre of attraction.

The magistrate was a short, bloated-looking man with an immense projecting under lip, and features indicative of sensuality in the highest degree. His voice was harsh and discordant.

"Well, prisoner," he cried "what is your name?"

"John Smith," said Claude. "What is the charge against me?"

"Oh, you want to know the charge, do you?"

"I trust that that is not a very unreasonable amount of curiosity in one so situated as I am."

"You are a scoundrel, sir! Hold your tongue."

"You are a fool, sir, and a liar," said Claude; "and if holding my tongue, in your vernacular, means keeping silent, while you make me the subject of silly and impertinent remarks, I will not do so."

The face of the irritable magistrate turned of a purplish hue. Never had he been before so defied in public, and, like most bullies, he had, when such a circumstance really took place, hardly anything to say for himself.

Judge Manning interposed.

"Pardon me, your worship," he said, "for interfering; but I am quite willing to state the charge against the prisoner at the bar."

"Very well—very well," said the magistrate, wiping his face with a flaring silk handkerchief. "Very well—as you please, my lord. Let it be so."

He spoke as though it was some great indulgence to the prisoner at the bar to state the charge against him. What a famous inquisitor such a magistrate would have made; but then, all this was in the olden time. Ministers are now forced to place men of education and some judgment on the magisterial bench; but it is only the force of public opinion that has made the change, as only the force of public opinion makes all changes in a country of corruption, and dominant rascality. All ministers go into office with but one motto, and that is "Resistance to all change."

"The charge," added Judge Manning, "is for the abduction of a young lady."

His voice faltered as he spoke.

"Not guilty," cried Claude.

"Silence," said the magistrate.

"Not guilty," cried Claude again, in a voice that might have been quite conveniently heard in Bow-street.

"Allow me to state the charge and to call my witnesses," said the judge.

The magistrate waved his hand as though he were the emperor of all the world, and only graciously gave his permission for other folks to breathe a little to keep life in them.

"I charge this man," added Judge Manning, "with the abduction, from the house where she was residing, some distance from London, of my daughter, Grace Manning."

He then briefly and very clearly went through the particulars already known to the reader; namely, the mysterious letter to Phillip, and the arrival of Claude at the mansion in town, with his accusation of Phillip, and assertion that Grace was in a chariot without, and would substantiate it; when no Grace and no such chariot could be seen at all in the neighbourhood. [For the full particulars of this see a former chapter.]

Claude listened to all this without the least interruption, and then the judge said—

"If the prisoner has any question to ask of me, I shall of course reply to him."

"I would merely ask if your nephew Phillip enjoys your confidence?"

"My confidence?"

"Yes. Is he a person of that character that you consider him worthy of belief?"

"Yes—yes—Now."

"Then there was a time when such was not the case."

"There was."

"I have nothing further to ask of you, sir. I have only to say that you are much deceived."

"Well," said the magistrate, "this is quite clear. The prisoner at the bar has committed a most heinous offence, and I shall commit him for trial."

"Perhaps you will condescend," said Claude, "to hear any witnesses first that may depose to what the prosecutor has stated, and which, with all due deference to him, I would suggest is not yet proved."

"I will call my nephew," said the judge.

"Ah," said Claude. "I shall be glad to see him."

Phillip was in the body of the court; and now, looking as pale as death itself, he made his appearance. It will easily be conceived how reluctant he must have been to come forward and confront Claude, and yet how impossible it was that he should not do so under the circumstances.

The oath was tendered to him and duly taken.

"Now, Phillip," said the judge. "You will oblige me by stating as briefly as you can all that you know of this affair; and you will be as temperate as you can."

"I will, sir."

"Proceed then," said the magistrate.

Phillip had time to muster up courage to look Claude in the face, but he could not do so; and the consciousness that the eye of the innocent man whom he was going to do all that perjury could do to condemn, was upon him, dazzled him like sunlight.

There surely is something in the very nature of truth that makes it apparent and infinitely superior in its very essence to falsehood; for notwithstanding Phillip had a good tale to tell, and was well backed by both the magistrate and his uncle, no one in the court could listen to him without a lurking suspicion that all was not right with his evidence.

CHAPTER LX.

WE shall see how he got on with his vile and slanderous tale of infamy and calumny.

Phillip Manning put in the letter that he said he had received, and which pretended to warn him of the projected abduction of his cousin Grace; and then he went on to say how he had tried to thwart the design—been too late, and finally, just managed to get to London again in time to put his uncle in possession of the frightful fact that Grace was actually carried off.

"Look at me," said Claude.

By a great effort, Phillip managed to do so.

"Where have you seen me before?"

"At my uncle's house, last night."

"And when and where before that?"

"Nowhere."

"Then I will refresh your memory. We met in a green lane near to Ealing, yesterday. Do you deny that, upon your oath?"

"I do."

"Do you keep a carriage?"

"Certainly not. My income will not permit me to do such a thing."

"But your income will no doubt easily permit you to hire one now and then, Mr. Phillip Manning, and that was possibly the case as regards the one in which I stopped you when you were conveying off Miss Manning."

"This is monstrous," said the magistrate; "what does the prisoner mean?"

"Ay," said Phillip, "what can he mean?"

"Simply," said Claude, "that I rescued Grace Manning from you yesterday, and brought her to London. By her own request, I left her for a few moments outside her father's house while I went in to prepare him for her sudden appearance, and during those few moments she disappeared. Where she is now, you, Phillip Manning, can best tell."

"I?"

"Yes, who but you?—who but you stole out of your uncle's house, while he and I were talking, and made off with her?"

"Surely, surely this cannot be true?" said the judge.

"It is all false," said Phillip. "I should be worse than the worst if I could do such acts."

"You would indeed, Phillip."

"And are," said Claude. "That such has been the case I am now quite certain; and a time will come, I hope, when the only witness who can clear up this affair will do so, to my honour and to Phillip's confusion."

"What witness?" said Phillip, looking round him with apprehension, as though he feared that from the crowd in the court some one would step forward and confront him, bringing proofs of his duplicity and villany.

"This man asks what witness?" said Claude; "and I declare that the witness I hope yet to see will be Grace Manning."

"Where is she?" said Phillip.

"What!" said Claude, "have you forgotten where you took her to last night?"

"I—I took her nowhere—I don't know anything about her."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "restore me my child, and, even now, I will abandon this charge, and you shall go free."

"I wish I could," said Claude; "ask your nephew."

The judge sunk back upon his seat again, from whence he had partially risen, and uttered a long-drawn sigh.

"I will commit him," said the magistrate. "Prisoner at the bar, you stand committed to take your trial for——"

"Stop a moment," said Claude. "Has Phillip Manning a servant—a stout man with red hair?"

"Yes, yes," said the judge, "he had."

"Then that servant was with him, when I met him in the green lane, and rescued your daughter from him. He was then playing the part of a postillion."

"Well, my servant is here," said Phillip; "put him upon his oath, and let us see where he was last night at the time you mention. Peter! Peter!"

"Here sir," said a voice; and the identical man who had driven the chaise, and who, it will be recollected, crawled away in the bustle attendant upon Claude's rescue of Grace Manning, made his appearance.

The oath was taken by this man; and Claude said to him—

"Where were you yesterday, about sunset?"

"I was in London all day, and all night too. My master gave me a guinea to go and relieve a poor family with, and that took me all day, for I could not find where they had moved to."

"But you found them at last; and, I hope, relieved them?"

"No; I couldn't for the life of me discover where they had moved to. Please, sir," turning to Phillip, "here's the guinea, as I could not find the poor people."

"That will do," said Claude. "I have nothing further to say to this witness. Time alone can put this affair to rights. I pity you, my lord judge,

more, if possible, than I feel for myself, for you, after all, in the uncertainty as to the fate of your child, are the worst victim of this most foul conspiracy."

"But it shall be found out," cried a voice from the body of the court.

"Ah!" said Claude.

He knew the voice. It was Sixteen-string Jack's.

"Who was that?" said the magistrate. "Seize that man, and bring him before me—officers, seize that man; I have not the slightest doubt but that it is one of the prisoner's abandoned accomplices."

An active search was made, and a vast amount of bustle ensued, but the officers with all their exertions were unsuccessful in discovering who had spoken the words.

Claude was very anxious to say a word or two to Jack; but all he could venture upon was a few words of a general character.

"If any friend of mine," he said, "be here, let him try to find Grace Manning as well for my sake as for her own and her father's consolation."

"Yes!" cried the voice again.

"Hush!" said Claude. "Hush!"

"Upon my life!" cried the magistrate, "this is very strange and very annoying. Officers, I demand that the person who interrupts the court in this manner be brought before me immediately!"

The officers now felt the necessity of laying hold of somebody, so, as they could not find the real offender, they laid violent hands on the most stupid, inoffensive, harmless-looking person they could see, and dragged him forward, exclaiming—

"Here he is, your worship. Here he is!"

"Well, fellow," said the magistrate, "what have you got to say for yourself for this indecorous interruption of the court?"

"It wasn't me, your wuship!"

"Come, come—be careful what you say, sir."

"Of course he denies it, your worship," said one of the officers.

"Of course," repeated his sapient worship. "I have a great mind, sir, to commit you to prison for a month; but as it is, I will let you off this once with a fine of forty— Eh?"

The clerk had whispered something to the magistrate, who, after a whispered consultation with that functionary, added—

"A-hem! Will anybody swear that this was the man who disturbed the court?"

The officers had some sort of dread that the real offender might come forward: and they nudged each other to take the necessary oath, which the magistrate observing, induced that potentate to say—

"Well, prisoner, for this time you may go; but don't let me see your face here again—mark that."

"Yes, your wuship; but I didn't speak."

"Go away, sir, and be thankful."

The man slunk away, and then the judge said, in a low tone, expressive of much dejection—

"May I request that your worship will remand the prisoner for a week? I hope, during that time, that by indefatigable exertions, something may be brought to light that will elucidate the mysteries in which this painful affair is enveloped."

The magistrate assented; and Claude found himself formally remanded for one week.

Claude was rather anxious regarding what prison he was to be sent to; for he knew that there was rather a paucity of jail accommodation in London, and that it was a very common thing for even remanded prisoners from all parts of the metropolis to be taken to Newgate.

"Where am I to be taken?" he said.

"To Newgate."

Claude looked upon his recognition at Newgate as certain, and all he said was—

"I protest against all this proceeding, Judge Manning. You will be sorry, sir, for sacrificing one who has run into much danger to save you much sorrow."

"Save me much sorrow?"

"Yes. I tried to do so by restoring to you your daughter. I failed in that, perhaps, mad-brained, too chivalric enterprise, and here I am!"

Judge Manning was evidently shaken.

"Would to God," he said, "I could see my way through all this tangle of incidents! I shudder to do less or more than justice!"

"The time will come," said Claude.

"Now, young feller," whispered an officer in his ear. "This way, if it's all the same to you."

In another moment he was led from the court. As he passed out he was quite close to Phillip Manning. That rascal glanced around him to see that his uncle was not nigh, and then he saluted Claude with a grin of malice as he said—

"I triumph now."

"Yes," said Claude, "you fancy so."

"I know it."

"But you dread the result, and that will surely come. Triumph, do you say? Is that cowardly hang-dog-look one of triumph? Why, you are shaking with fear, to your inmost soul. Officers, look at us and say which, in your experience, is the guilty, and which the innocent man?"

The officers only looked at each other, but they made no reply to this remark of Claude's. It was not at all likely, under the circumstances, that they would. As for Phillip he walked away as quietly as possible.

"Shall I keep up my incognito or not?" was the question that Claude now put to himself. After a few moments council, he answered, and in the affirmative. A coach was procured. He was told that that was done by order of Judge Manning, and in the course of about five minutes more our hero was on his road to Newgate.

He was carefully handcuffed.

If such had not been the case he might yet have made some sort of effort at escape, upon the principle, that it ought to be much easier to get out of a coach than out of Newgate.

The gloomy portal of the prison was soon reached, and then came the most anxious moment of all—a moment which would decide whether Claude would be recognised or not by the officials.

"What sort of a lot have you got there?" said the man at the wicket.

"I'll be hung if I know," said the officer who had special charge of Claude.

"But I don't suppose it's of much consequence; I'm to give this letter to the governor. Is he up and about?"

"Not he. Didn't you know he's been confined to his bed for a fortnight?"

"Not I."

"Well, it's a fact then, and our fellows say here that he sickened when Claude Duval got away the last time, and has never been his own man again, and won't be, 'till we have Claude under lock and key."

"Then the letter must be taken to him."

"Ay, that can be done. Peter, take this letter to the governor; I suppose it's about the prisoner?"

"Not a doubt of it as it's from old Judge Manning. The charge though don't seem to be much, and between you and I and the door-post, Bill, this chap, in my notion of things, isn't the right party."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I do. You take a look at him."

Claude had managed, by stooping, to decrease his real height very much, and by slightly puffing out his cheeks, he certainly materially altered his

personal appearance, so that one would have needed to be very familiar, indeed, with him to have recognised him.

"Humph!" said the man who was, as it is technically termed, on the lock. "Humph! It seems, to me, as if I had seen somebody like him somewhere; but I'll be hanged if I know where."

At this moment the lad, who had been sent to the governor with the letter, came back with it opened, and said,—

"The governor is too ill to attend to it; but he says 'I'm to show it to Mr. Blain, and he is to attend to it.'"

"Then, it's no secret," said the turnkey. "Let's have a look at it."

"Ah read it out," said the officer, who had brought Claude from Bow-street.

"Read it out."

"You read it, Peter."

Peter, in a school-boy-like drawling tone of voice, without the smallest regard to punctuation, then read as follows:

"Judge Manning presents his compliments to the Governor of Newgate, and would feel obliged by the remanded prisoner, John Smith, being placed in a private room, and shown all the indulgence consistent with his safe keeping; as Judge Manning has not sufficient evidence to pronounce confidently on his guilt, and is anxious to commit as little injustice as possible."

By this time some half dozen officers had repaired to the vestibule, and no one seemed to recognise Claude. They all heard the letter read, and then turned away with looks of indifference, as though they would have said—

"Oh, this is nothing; this will turn out no case."

The one named Blain now took the letter, and intimated to Claude that he was to follow him.

Claude did so, affecting to be quite lame of one leg.

"Are you hurt?" said the officer.

"No," said Claude, "this is an old affair."

"Well, you can rest yourself as long as you like in the place I'm going to take you to; I suppose it's all some mistake?"

"Yes," said Claude, "quite so."

"Ah, well you will have nothing to complain of in Newgate; and when you see Judge Manning again, you can say that Blain made you as comfortable as he could."

"I will; and yet it's an awful thing to be put in Newgate."

"Stuff, I live in it. This way—this way.

I'd work not by night nor by day,
But back on my fortune I'd fall,
If I could but find out the right way,
To say 'wanted' to famed Claude Duval

Ah, sir, he's the fellow we are all sighing after, here."

"Really," said Claude.

CHAPTER LXI.

If Claude could in these adverse circumstances in which he was placed, have been amused at anything, probably the regrets, both in prose and verse, of the officer in Newgate, at the impossibility of capturing such a prize as Claude Duval, would have had that effect.

But his heart was too full to enable him to do more than faintly smile.

The room into which he was now conducted, differed very much indeed from those sad and dreary portions of the prison which ordinary malefactors, who had no one upon any ground or with any authority to intercede for them, were placed in by the officials.

The letter from Judge Manning had done much more for Claude in Newgate

than all the appeals to humanity and sense of justice that could have been made, would have accomplished; and when it is recollected that many an innocent man is taken up and committed to jail until an investigation of the charge against him is made, it is a disgrace to the jurisprudence of this country, that his punishment should begin before the law has declared him guilty.

But yet such is the case.

It is said in England to be an axiom that the law presumes all accused persons to be innocent, until, by the regular course of judicial investigation, they are clearly and distinctly proved to be guilty; but to any one who has paid attention to the subject, it is quite clear that the administrators of the law, from the lowest policeman to the governor of Newgate, are of a different opinion.

They presume that the suspected and the accused are in all cases guilty, and therefore there is no difference between the convicted thief and the man whose neighbour has "borne false witness against him," in regard to treatment.

Any man in England, who chooses to take a false oath, may place any other man in prison—put handcuffs upon his wrists—associate him with thieves, and characters worse than thieves; and although in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the innocence of the man falsely accused, would eventually be brought to light, who is to undo what is done?—Who is to say that he has not suffered as much up to the point when his innocence becomes apparent, as though he had been guilty?

Hence, then, we say that the treatment of accused persons in England is in all cases most gross and unjustifiable.

That Judge Manning felt this to be the case, is pretty manifest by the care he took that Claude should not undergo it.

The judge had doubts of Claude's guilt, and hence he had sent the letter, which the reader has heard read, to the governor of Newgate. No doubt, in the clear and astute mind of the judge, as the case or presumed case against Claude had developed itself, there had arisen many circumstances to cast a doubt upon his nephew Phillip's statements; and from all that was taking place, Claude entertained a sanguine expectation that if he happened not to be recognised, he might soon find himself at liberty.

There was a carpet upon the floor of the room to which he was consigned, and in other respects it bore evidence of regard for comfort. In a small closet adjoining was a bed, and indeed the only circumstance that really gave it what might be called quite a prison-look was that the windows were well defended by iron bars both within and without.

"What do you think of this?" said the turnkey, as he glanced round with quite an air of pride, like the owner of some palace. "You may be as comfortable here as the day is long. Don't you think you can now?"

"I should not wonder," said Claude.

"Only look. Here's a fine view of a bit of the outer wall, and if you only get to this corner of the window and squint downwards, you will see a little bit of one of the enclosed yards."

"Very lively, indeed," said Claude.

"Ah, you may say that. I don't know how they are going to manage about your grub, but I suppose as they have put you into such good quarters as regards your lodging, that will be all right."

"I don't know," said Claude, "what they mean to do, but I know what they ought to do."

"What's that?"

"Why, compensate an innocent man in every way that is possible for an unjust detention here. Liberty is the dearest possession in the world, and if a man be deprived of that, he may well, provided he be innocent, expect other indulgences."

"Humph!" said the jailer, "as for the innocence, that's neither here nor

there. We never yet had anybody in Newgate that, according to their *own* account wasn't one of the most injured of individuals; and as for innocence, lord bless you, new-born babes, afore they begin squalling, can't be more innocent than they. Ha—ha—!"

"Ah," said Claude, as he threw himself upon a singularly hard couch that was in the room. "You look, my friend, upon all these things with a professional eye."

"I rather think I do. However, I wish you well; and if I can do you a good turn, I will, for to tell you the truth, I like the looks of you."

"You have my best thanks."

The man smiled and withdrew. Claude heard the sound of the lock of the door as it was carefully secured on the outside, and then there was the unequivocal bang of an iron bar into its place.

"These indulgences," said Claude to himself, "are not without the usual severities, but this is better than a cell. I wonder now if I owe this to the honest convictions creeping over Judge Manning, that I have told the truth and that his nephew is a rogue, or to his fears about his child?"

By a natural movement enough Claude now commenced a careful examination of his prison.

No place could so little reward a scrutiny. There was literally nothing that could invite a second glance. The walls were stone. The floor was stone. Holes or cupboards, with the exception of that which held his bed, there were none, and that might be called something between a hole and a cupboard. Less than five minutes sufficed to convince Claude that there was nothing to glean in the way of hopeful information from an examination of the room, if it might be called so, in which he was.

He cast himself upon the hard couch again, and gave himself up to reflections, some of which were of anything but a pleasant or consolatory character. It seemed to him to be next to an impossibility that he should escape recognition from some of the authorities of Newgate, and in that case he, of course, knew that the very worst might be expected. There was only one gleam of consolation amid the sombre darkness of his position, and that was the conviction that his bride, Cicely, was safe and well cared for.

It cost him much thought, however, and many pangs to know how and in what way he should communicate to her his perilous position.

When he came upon that subject, the tumult of his thoughts would not allow him to be still, and he rose and paced the small apartment to and fro, with rapid and uneasy steps.

In the midst of this state of things, he was startled by the sudden opening of the door, and Phillip Manning stood upon the threshold.

"You will find him there, sir," said a voice. "I will wait, and you have only to call out in a loud voice 'Very,' and I will come and let you out."

"Thank you," said Phillip.

The door was closed, and he stood a couple of paces within Claude's particular prison.

At this moment, the impulse to knock him down certainly came strongly over Claude, but by a powerful effort of his judgment, he restrained it, for he felt how important it was to him not only to hear what Phillip had to say, but likewise to avoid making any commotion in the prison, which might have the effect of summoning round him some who might know him.

He would not speak first however, but he looked Phillip in the face with a stern defiance, before which the conscious villain shrunk and trembled.

At length, finding that Claude would not ask him the purport of his visit, he was compelled to commence the conference himself.

"You may make me your friend, if you like," said Phillip.

"No," said Claude. "If such a thing were possible I would decline the process. Speak out at once, and say what new circumlocution of villainy brings you here?"

"I regret the turn affairs have taken."

"Indeed."

"Yes, in truth I do; and I think, upon mature consideration, we had better back out of it now, with what we can get."

"We?"

"Yes; I say we, because I am quite willing that you should be a sharer in the full proceeds, you see."

"Go on. Explain yourself more fully," said Claude, controlling as well as he was able, which was not very well, the indignation that was swelling at his heart.

"Why, I don't mind telling you, because no one else hears me, and if you repeat it, nobody will believe you, that I did, while you were talking to the Judge, pass out and get possession of Grace."

"I knew it."

"That is to say you guessed it."

"Well, well, Phillip, I guessed at it.—What next?"

"I can't help stopping to tell you how well pleased I am to find you so reasonable about this matter; for, to tell you the truth, I fully expected you would have stormed and raved in good style."

"You see how calm I am?"

"Yes, I perceive. Well, as I was saying, I recovered my prisoner and have her safe, but—~~but~~ the thing is a failure rather, and—and——"

"How a failure? If you have her safe, what do you mean by a failure? You must explain yourself more particularly."

"Well," said Phillip, with a toss of his head. "You know so much of the affair already, and you suspect so much more, that the safest way, if any good is to be done with you, is to tell you all."

"Much the safest," said Claude.

"So I think. In the first place I want money. In the next I was not without a certain amount of admiration of my cousin Grace."

"Good."

"Well, as we were first cousins, and so within the legal bounds of consanguinity, I did not see the least objection to marry her. She is my uncle's only child, and will inherit all his wealth, to a certainty, and he is rich. I proposed to Grace."

"And was rejected?"

"Yes, with great scorn. From that moment I promised myself revenge; but I likewise promised myself that I would be careful in my manner of exacting it. Grace went to stay with a distant relative, from whom I got her away by the story of her father's illness, as you are well aware. You met us and spoiled my plans, or I should have taken her where she would have been quite safe, and I would have forced her into a marriage or blighted her existence in such a way, that it would have been a relief to have had even me to have called by the name of husband."

"The situation," said Claude, "must have been indeed desperate that would have made that a desirable resource."

Phillip continued without heeding this bitter sarcasm.

"But things have turned out differently. She is as obstinate as twenty mules, and I am afraid that she will kill herself. All I have got her to consent to, is, that if she is restored to her father, she will, provided you likewise consent, bury the whole affair in oblivion, and not accuse me. But that is only half the battle gained. I want money, and surely you cannot be quite indifferent to the claims of a couple of thousand pounds."

"Not at all."

"Well then, I know that for the restoration of his child, the judge, if you ask him, will hand you a draft for £4000 or £5000, and consent to ask no questions. He will be with you here in the course of an hour. I ask you to adopt that course. Ask him for the money. Promise him his child by twelve o'clock to night; and then when you hand me the cheque, I will restore her, and to-morrow morning we will meet and share the proceeds."

"Ah!" said Claude. He could not trust himself at the moment to say more.

"Well, is it a bargain?"

"Where is she?"

"You must excuse me there, my friend. That is a secret worth knowing, so I intend to keep it to myself."

Claude covered his face with both his hands and thought. Shall I, he thought, consent in appearance to this villany for the sake of restoring the child to the father, and then afterwards proclaim it? No—no. He, this Phillip, will bind Grace to secrecy by some oaths, which her pure spirit will not break; and then I should denounce him in vain; besides, could I go through the interview with the judge? No—no. A hundred times no. The words in which I should clothe the proposal for the restoration of his daughter for a sum of money, would stick in my throat. I could not—I could not!

"Have you decided?" said Phillip.

"Yes!" cried Claude, with startling energy.

"And you will do it?"

"You will find what I will do. Villain! Monster!"

Claude made a dash at him and caught him by the throat. Phillip raised a stifled cry, but it sufficed to reach the ears of the turnkey, who opened the door just as Phillip was turning black in the face.

"Holloa! What's this!"

"Keep off!" cried Claude. "Keep off! There will be one scoundrel the less in the world. Keep off, I pray you."

"No, no, this sort of thing won't do," said the turnkey.

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a whistle, and blew a shrill note, which had the effect of bringing half-a-dozen turnkeys to his aid, and by their united exertions, Phillip Manning was torn, more dead than alive, from the grasp of Claude.

For a few minutes the scene of confusion was most intense; and several of the officers were of opinion that Phillip Manning was dead.

"You have let yourself in for it now," said one; "you will swing for this."

"Such a villain," said Claude, "deserved death from the first hand that could be raised with sufficient power to inflict it."

"Ah," said an old officer, shaking his head sagely from side to side. "If all the villains were to be throttled, what would become of the population I should like to know. That would never do."

The door of the room was again closed upon Claude, and fastened securely, while the insensible, and as some thought, the dead Phillip was taken to the Infirmary, for the purpose of seeing if the surgeon could do anything for him.

It was only a case of suspended animation. A little blood-letting soon recovered him. Such folks as Phillip Manning, somehow, always do take a deal of killing, while people whose lives are of both public and private consequence, most easily

"Shuffle off this mortal coil."

There is surely a special Providence for the conservation of blackguardism. Do we not see daily instances of men whose lives, as far as society is concerned, are perfectly worthless, running risks and escaping dangers which would be the instant destruction of any really estimable and valuable member of society? There are men who ride across horses, who patronise gigs, who ride steeple-chases, and daily expose themselves to all the chances of death and accident, and yet upon such men's safety, you may freely wager—and why? Simply because their deaths would be a gain rather than a loss to society.

And so Phillip recovered, with his heart full of such unmitigated hatred to Claude, whom it must not be forgotten he only knew as John Smith, that nothing short of his complete destruction would now satisfy him.



Phillip Manning compelling his Cousin Grace to drink the Poisoned Wine.

It was about half an hour after these events, that Claude's door was opened again, and the turnkey said—

"Here's your brother, Tom Smith, as he calls himself. I suppose you won't go for to throttle him!"

"My brother!" exclaimed Claude.

"Yes. But if he isn't, why we can——"

"Stop! Stop!" cried Claude, "it's all right; I only thought he was out of town. That's all. Let him come in directly."

"Ah, John," said a voice, "I knew you would be glad to see me."

It was Dick Turpin.

Claude, at the moment, deeply congratulated himself that he had taken the hint about a brother, and not said anything to breed a suspicion that such was not the case; but he was, at the same time, full of wonder to know how Dick could possibly have found out what had happened to him.

"I am, indeed, glad to see you, Tom," said Claude.

"Oh, it's all right," said the turnkey, as he closed the door. "There will be no throttling this time, I suppose."

The moment they were fairly alone, Claude said,—

"Dick, I am pleased, and afflicted at this visit."

"How afflicted?"

"At the danger you thrust yourself into."

"Oh, don't think of that. Danger is the element such men as you and I live in. It comes as natural to us as water to a fish; but, speak low, and don't pronounce my name, nor will I yours. Walls have ears they say, and I don't feel much trust in anything, even being quite alone in Newgate."

"I will be careful; but how did you find me out?"

"I have many and some very strange sources of information. At some other time we will talk about that. Moments are precious just now; for, although, it is contrary to their orders to forbid me to visit you, upon my stating my near relationship; yet they will cut that visit as short as possible, you may depend."

"True—true!"

"Then tell me, Claude, at once, what is best to be done, and Jack and I will do it. Bother my tongue! I uttered your name just now, after myself giving you the caution not to do so."

"Never mind. You spoke in a very low tone."

"I hope I did."

"Be assured you did, and that, as yet, all is well. There is only one course of conduct that you and Jack can adopt to aid me, and that is to follow Phillip Manning, and find out where he has bestowed Grace."

"He has her, then?"

"Yes; the villain has been here and confessed as much. I have half choked him, I believe; but I hope I have not wholly done so. The restoration of Grace to her father, untrammelled by any promise to keep secret Phillip's share in the infamous transaction, will be the signal for my instant liberation; and if that can take place before any awkward recognition of me takes place here, the whole affair will end well, and do to laugh at on a winter's night."

"It shall be done."

"Then I feel easy; for well I know that if it can be done at all, you and Jack are the persons to do it: and now, as regards Cicely, merely tell her that I am engaged for a day or two upon a matter that has suddenly sprung up; but it is quite needless to mention me in any connexion with this dreadful building, which is already sufficiently a bug-bear to her imagination."

"All shall be as you wish in that respect,"

"Hilloa! is the gossiping over?" cried the turnkey. "Ten minutes is all we allow."

"Yes, yes," said Dick. "Good-by, John."

"Good-by," said Claude. "All's right. They are very civil to me here, Tom, and this man has been particularly so."

Both Claude and Dick felt the importance of propitiating the officials of the prison, so Dick at once handed the man a guinea, saying—

"Take that as an earnest of another, when my brother here is declared innocent, which he is."

The turnkey tossed the coin in the air by a dexterous movement of his thumb; and as he caught it in its descent, and placed it in his waistcoat pocket, he looked aside at Claude, saying—

"He won't fare the worse; but mum is the word about the spangle."

"All's right," said Dick; "I know. God bless you, brother John.—You will soon be out of this."

Claude was again alone, but his reception of visitors was not yet over. Phillip Manning had spoken for once in a way, just because it happened to suit him, the truth, when he said the judge was about to pay Claude a visit, and sure enough, Dick had hardly got well clear of Newgate, when the judge was announced.

Claude rose and received the old man with respect, for he could not quarrel with him, knowing well, that in his conduct towards him he acted as any one would have done under the circumstances, and probably with much more consideration, than any ordinary person would have brought to bear upon the subject.

Claude was aware that the judge placed his own back to the light, which gave him the advantage of seeing Claude's features fully, while his own were partially shrouded; but Claude had no sort of objection to such an arrangement. He had no emotion of his mind, that might find expression upon his countenance, to conceal.

"You will perhaps be surprised at this visit," said the judge.

"No sir. Your nephew told me of it."

"What, Phillip?"

"Even so, sir."

"Then he has made already an attempt to move you to compassion for a father's sufferings? What has been your answer?"

"Phillip has made no such attempt."

"Do not try to deceive me. For what other motive could he seek you in this gloomy prison?"

"To add to his villany by attempting to get me to participate in a scheme of robbing you."

"Impossible!"

"And yet true, sir. I took him by the throat as my answer. They wrested him from me, or he would not have lived to deny the new charge against him as, of course, he will most freely and distinctly."

"Alas! alas! What am I to think?"

"Nothing is more natural than that you should be thoroughly confused by all that has happened. You would need to have the prescience of the Almighty to see your way through the conflicting evidence that is brought before you. Nothing but the evidence now of your daughter, Grace, can be conclusive to your mind."

"Restore her to me—restore her to me!"

"I would that I could."

"Hark you, sir; this child—this Grace—is the child of my old age. My only one. Without her I am desolate. God who looks into all hearts as into an open book, only knows if you be guilty or innocent of her abduction; but you must confess yourself that circumstances are strongly against you."

"They are."

"Well—well, if you be guilty, I implore you, as you wish that Heaven should overlook that guilt—as you hope for all, ay, more than all, the advantages you ever expected to accrue from that guilt—I entreat you to restore her to me upon your own terms; you have only to speak."

"This is hard, indeed."

"What is hard?"

"To be thus appealed to upon the presumption of my guilt. I tell you, sir judge, once for all, that I was your child's defender—that I rescued her; but that she has been torn away from me and from you again. Look to Phillip for a further answer."

The judge groaned.

"Yes, sir; I add, and I add it most emphatically—Look to Phillip, whom you have loaded with benefits—to Phillip, whom you have had occasion to forgive for much, and whom you have so forgiven. Look to him, and to him only, for your child."

"I am as one in a maze, I know not what to think, nor which way to move," said the judge, mournfully.

"Hark ye, sir," said Claude, after a slight pause. "I do not feel any degree of bitterness or resentment against you for this imprisonment which I innocently suffer. I admit it was forced upon you."

"If you be innocent," said the judge, "you are the most generous of men. But if guilty, you are——"

"Go on, sir. Being innocent, I can very well bear to hear what you would say of guilt."

"You are, then, if guilty, the most artful and spurious."

"Excepting one."

"What one?"

"Your nephew, Phillip, sir."

"If I were once only assured of his guilt in the present instance, he should never again reach my heart; but it is too improbable. What could he, of all men, have to gain by the abduction of my child, but shame and want?"

"He knows that you are rich, sir."

"Granted that I am. What then?"

"He knows that Grace is your only child, and that upon her will devolve the greater amount of your wealth. Thus calculating, then, his great object was to get her to consent to an union with him."

"You are wrong. She has already explicitly refused him."

"Yes, but he hoped that by taking her from all who would befriend, he should be able to place her in such a position that even marriage with him would be far better than the shame which would be her position otherwise."

A flush of angry colour came to the judge's cheeks.

"No, no," he said, "that is too much."

"In what way?" said Claude, speaking quickly. "Do you think that anything in the way of wickedness, that you and I may imagine, is in reality, too much for Phillip to perpetrate? I tell you, sir, he has been to me to-day."

"I know it. He has tried to move your heart."

"Move my heart? In good truth, sir, he did move both my heart and brain to that extent, that I could not keep my fingers from his throat. I did not kill him; but it will be some time before Phillip Manning forgets the clutch with which I held him, in consequence of moving my heart."

The judge glared at Claude with an expression that looked almost like insanity, as he said—

"And what is your account of the interview you have had with Phillip?"

"The true one?"

"But its substance?"

"You will not believe it if I tell it to you; and yet you shall know that he admitted to me he knew where Grace was, and his object in coming to me was to get me to take the guilt off his shoulders, by owning that I was the criminal, and asking of you a large sum for the restoration of your child, which sum he proposed to share with me. That was his errand."

The judge looked astonished.

"And your answer?" he said.

"Look for it upon Phillip's throat."

"I know not what to think. I am bewildered. Your tone and manner are so like innocence, and yet the circumstances are so strongly against you, that you may well suppose that even, with all my experience, I know not what to think."

"Granted, sir. And now I will make to you a proposal."

"Name it. If it tend to the restoration of my child, you may make your own terms. Go on. Go on!"

"The first condition of my proposal is, that you will not insult me by supposing that what I am about to offer to do is for money. Do you consent to that?"

"I do."

"Then; sir, I will make an effort to get back your daughter from the hands of your nephew Phillip, if you will aid me to do so. I have friends without this prison. It matters not who or what they are, but for my sake they will do their utmost to find out where Phillip has bestowed Grace. Their exertions will be something worth thinking of, but from you I must have certain facilities for them."

"Name any sum required."

"It is not money. What I demand is that they come and go as they please to me in this prison, without question or hindrance."

"Granted."

"'Tis settled then. I demand too, that I may correspond with who I

please, without my letters being subject to the surveillance of the authorities of the prison."

"Send any letter you please, addressed to whom you like, under cover to me, and I pledge you my honour as a gentleman to forward it."

"I am quite satisfied, sir."

"Then you will try your best?"

"Sir—sir. Remember that you still suspect me guilty."

"No, hardly now."

"Why am I here then? Nay do not look confused, sir, at the seeming inconsistency of your acts. Were I in your place, and you in mine, I dare say I should do as you do, and with that feeling, I of course find no fault with you. As soon as I can get any intelligence for you, satisfactory or otherwise, you shall hear it."

"I thank you, and be assured that if in this matter I have done you an injustice, I have both the will and the power to amply indemnify you for it. You shall want for nothing here."

"I thank you. I am certainly not partial to prison fare."

"Then you know what it is?" said the judge, quickly.

"Yes," said Claude, "and I can well see that that admission tells much against me in your mind. But let it go. You will find that there are worse men out of prisons by far, sir, than in them, and that piece of knowledge may be of the first importance to you upon the seat of judgment."

The judge rose and went to the door of Claude's cell. A turnkey was within call, to whom he said—

"Is the governor up?"

"Yes, my lord judge," said the man, "and he will be happy to see you."

"Very well. I want to speak to him." Then turning to Claude, he said—
"You may write to me with safety, and you will find, by the free egress and ingress of your friends, if you send for them, that the agreement is being carried out."

Claude bowed.

The door of the prison room was closed, and again barred and locked, and Claude was alone.

"All may yet be well," he said, as he paced the narrow confines of the apartment. "If Dick and Jack can be but the means of restoring Grace to her father, the tale that she will have to tell will complete my justification, and all I shall then ask will be an instant release. Oh, that I were on the road again, breathing the free air of Heaven from the back of my gallant steed."

The very first thing now that Claude wished to do was to make Dick and Jack aware of the sort of bargain he had made with the judge.

This could now easily be accomplished by writing to them; and putting the utmost confidence in the promise of the judge to forward his letters without any examination, provided they were addressed to him, he wrote the particulars of the conversation we have worded, ending by saying—

"To save me, detect Phillip Manning. I leave it to the skill and the friendship of you both, to do as much for me."

CHAPTER LXII.

THE cogitations of Phillip Manning, after his interview with Claude, could not be of a pleasant character. In addition to being half choked, he had, by his folly and his criminality in the whole transaction, placed himself in a most uncomfortable situation.

Gladly, most gladly, would he now have backed out of the affair, if he could possibly have done so without compromising himself beyond all power of redemption with his uncle.

Whatever scenes or follies of extravagance the old judge might from time to time be inclined to forgive his nephew, it was not at all probable that if he came before him in the character of the abductor of his much-loved child, that he could feel anything but the most intense indignation.

Phillip felt this.

We will, preceding the receipt of Claude's letter by Dick and Jack—by-the-by, it was addressed to the latter, for Claude felt that Jack deserved the compliment at his hands—take a peep at the proceedings of Master Phillip.

We have already stated that while Claude was carrying on that most inauspicious dialogue with the old judge, Phillip had gone into the street, and found the carriage which contained Grace.

The young creature had been waiting most anxiously for the return of Claude, and when the coach door was opened, she looked for nothing but to see him, and to hear some message from her father.

When the hateful countenance of Phillip Manning met her gaze, she seemed as though her life were evaporating, and she could only gaze upon him with a speechless despair.

"You are mine," he said. "You are mine. Ha! ha! I have you once again, and your are mine."

Overcome completely by the sound of these terrible words, a dimness, as if the world were enveloped in a mist, came before her eyes, and she swooned, falling to the bottom of the carriage.

"Good!" said Phillip. "Good!"

He at once closed the carriage door, and having carefully fastened it, he himself mounted on the box and drove off.

Where and how she was bestowed, will be best understood by a slight detail of circumstances than ensued, upon her coming to her senses again.

When Grace opened her eyes, all was darkness—darkness, too, of the most profound character—so that although she held up her hand before her eyes, she could not see it.

At first her memory was so confused that she could not recollect the various circumstances of the last twenty-four hours; but this state of uncertainty did not last long, for gradually, circumstance by circumstance then came back to her in detail, all the events that had placed her in her present position, but what that position was she could only conjecture.

She at first felt fearful that she was in some sort of bondage that would prevent her from rising; but she found that that was not the case, and she grieved her feet.

"Father! father! Help me!" she cried.

The echo of her own voice was the only answer that was returned to her cry for aid.

"Just Heaven!" she cried, "what will become of me?"

She sank upon her knees, and remained for some time in that attitude of supplication to the Deity, begging for that mercy and consideration which, if extended to any one in this world, surely should be to one so pure and so faultless as she was.

When she rose from this act of devotion, she felt greatly refreshed in spirit, and much more able to reason calmly upon her perilous situation. She did not entertain the smallest doubt as to the fact of her being again in the power of Phillip Manning, and she resolved that, let what might occur, he should not see any evidences of fear upon her part now.

"If I snbdue him," she said, "it will only be by showing no fear. His dastard spirit would rejoice in my despondency, as much as it will be cowed by an appearance of courage."

There could not possibly be a juster mode of reasoning than this, as regarded Phillip Manning. His was just the sort of disposition to indulge in weak triumph where he found submission, but to be abashed and shrinking before that real courage, which even in the midst of his power should defy him.

Having come to this resolve, Grace began, as well as the intense darkness

would permit her, to feel about the room, in order to ascertain its proportions, and, if possible, find some window or other aperture, by which she could get light.

After a time she did find the window. But the shutters were fast closed. She could only tell by the feel that a window it was; but all her exertions did not enable her to find any means of unclosing the shutters.

Suddenly, while she was engaged upon the attempt, she heard a rattling noise and from beneath a door, she saw a thin pencil of light.

Clasping her hands, she waited in expectation of what might then ensue, fully determined to defy Phillip to the utmost.

She heard a key rattle in a lock—she heard a heavy bolt drawn from the outside of a door, and then it opened, and Phillip Manning, conveying a lamp in one hand, appeared before her,

The sudden glare of light from the lamp, after the intense darkness she had been in, was painful to her eyes at first; but in the course of a moment or two, that feeling wore off, and she was able to remove her hand from before them. Phillip had paused upon the threshold, and was looking into the room with an inquiring gaze.

“Grace! he said, “Grace!”

She would not answer him.

“Good Heaven!” he exclaimed, “she has not escaped?”

He rushed into the room with vehemence, but when he saw her standing by the window he drew a long breath of most exquisite relief, and holding the lamp above his head, he said—

“So you are here?”

Still she would not answer him.

“This obstinacy,” he said, “will not avail you. Grace, do you know where you are?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“Ah! you know?”

“I am in the hands of a villain, so far as he thinks, but in reality I am, as he too is, in the hands of Heaven.”

“Let Heaven open the door, then, for you,” he said, with a sneer; “but I am not going to quarrel with you, Grace. I come to bring you freedom and happiness.”

She started and felt her colour come and go at the delightful prospect, but fearing some villany, as, indeed, she had abundant cause to do, she said nothing.

“You have but to acquiesce in what I shall propose to you,” he added, “and you will never again be subject to such an annoyance as you now suffer from; your fate is in your own hands.”

“Go on,” she said, finding that he would not continue speaking unless she made some sort of reply to him—“go on.”

“You encourage me to proceed,” he said. “’Tis well that you should do so, and I am glad, indeed, to find you so reasonable. Now, Grace, you know that I love you.”

“You—love—me?”

“Yes, and why not?”

“Oh, no, no, no!”

“You doubt it? I ought to be able to convince you of your error.”

“No, Phillip, no. Love desires the happiness of its object, but *you* do not, cannot love but one. It is not in your nature.”

“And that one is you?”

“No, no.”

“What absurd story have you got hold of to my prejudice? Who could have dared to tell you falsely that I love another. Name at once the author of the calumny? Who is it you would say that I love?”

“Yourself, Phillip. Only yourself.”

He looked abashed.

"Pshaw!" he said, after taking a few moments to recover himself. "Pshaw! This is only some foolish delusion. My love for you is so great that, you see, in the face of the most serious obstacles, I have taken you away; and now, Grace, you have only to consent to be mine, and you shall be at liberty."

"Look you, Phillip. Were death by some lingering torture upon the one hand and you upon the other, I would gladly, if no other mode of escaping from you presented itself, endure the bitterest pangs."

"You only say this, Grace."

"I think it, too."

"No, no, or if you do, your mind will change some day. Perhaps the beauty upon which you, no doubt, pride yourself, will fade after the confinement of a year or two in this place, and you will be right glad to embrace my offer. I will keep you here until you go mad and your father dies, and then I will produce you, and as your next of kin, claim the benevolent care of you and all your property. Ha! ha!"

"Oh, Phillip do you, can you think there is a God above us?"

"I care not."

"The time will come for you to care, indeed."

"Ha! ha! You would attempt to frighten me by religious terrors, would you? but such a course will not do for Phillip Manning. I am long past all that. Let us kiss and be friends."

"Away! do not pollute me by your touch."

"Now by all that's—I've half a mind. But no; that would be folly. You will think better of all this, Grace. I am willing to restore you to your father, upon condition that you immediately give me your hand, and likewise tell to him, to account for your absence, such a tale as I shall concoct for you."

"Never—never!"

"Beware—beware!"

"Beware of what?—Of you, poor villain? No! You have the heart to think of deep crimes, but not the courage to perpetrate them! I am not afraid of you, Phillip Manning, and I never shall be. My first act the moment I see my father's face, will be to proclaim to him your villany, and to ask his utmost gratitude for him who rescued me from you some time since, and to whom some sad accident must have happened, or I should not have again fallen into your power."

"He's in Newgate."

"Newgate?"

"Yes, charged by your father, at my instigation, with your abduction. Your father is fully possessed with a belief that he has secreted you somewhere, and will no doubt, exert the utmost rigour of the law against him. But you can save him."

"I?"

"Yes; by consenting to become mine he shall be released. All that is required is that your father should be to a certain extent mystified in the affair, which will do him no harm."

"Once and for all," replied Grace, "I reject with scorn your proposals. If I suffer—if my generous and gallant preserver suffer—if my father suffer, let the account of all these deeds be asked of you at the judgment seat of the Almighty. It is your work, Phillip."

"We shall see," said Phillip, "we shall see."

He glared at her with such fiendish ferocity, that even boldly as she had hitherto maintained herself towards him, she almost shrank before him, fearing that he might descend to personal violence.

This no doubt would have been the result of the interview, but really, Phillip felt a degree of terror at the young girl, half a child as she was, which kept him back; and besides, he knew that there could be no hope of anything in the shape of a reconciliation if he once laid his hand upon her in anger.

He drew back.

"Thank my clemency," he said.

She did not condescend to contradict him. Her attitude and the expression upon her face were fully sufficient to show him what her feelings were upon the subject.

For a few moments now, a death-like stillness subsided in the room; and finding she was not likely to break it, Phillip said—

"Perhaps you are not quite aware, that by the law as it stands at present, it is death to abduct from her home a person of your age? When he who now lies in Newgate upon that charge, suffers on the scaffold, I will bring you an account of his last moments."

Without waiting for her reply to this, which he thought likely enough might be one he did not wish to hear, he abruptly left the room.

All was dark again.

When she found herself alone, the feelings of Grace underwent rather a sort of revulsion, and she trembled excessively and wept. But her natural good sense—her education and her courage, soon rose up against the longer continuance of such a state of depression, and she rallied amazingly.

"No—no," she said, "I may suffer, and all who are dear to me may suffer, but I will not deviate from the path which I know and feel to be the right one."

She found her way, notwithstanding the intense darkness in which she was, to the couch upon which she had been lying before her recovery, and sitting upon its edge, she began as calmly as she could to think over her position, and its meagre prospects.

While she was thus occupied, she heard the voice of Phillip in the passage, if passage it were, outside the door of the room, saying—

"Be quick—be quick!"

The door was opened, and while he held the light, an old decrepid hag of a woman came in with some bread and a pitcher of water.

"Here, my honey," she said, in a strong Irish accent, "don't say we starves you, any way."

"Peace!" cried Phillip.

"Musha! master, I was only saying to the little ladybird that any how we——"

"Peace, I say—Come away."

The old woman hobbled out of the room again, and Phillip carefully fastened the door. She heard him fumbling at it for some time, and it was clear he was most particular about the fastenings.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE letter that Claude sent through the orders of Judge Manning to Jack came duly to hand.

Dick had completely foregone his intentions of leaving that part of the country, and now signified to Jack, that he would devote himself entirely to the service of Claude, in the matter of his most unjust imprisonment.

To say that Jack was pleased at this determination is to say very little, for in point of fact he was overjoyed at it.

"It is such brave friends as yourself," said Jack, "that Claude wants, now he is in difficulty and danger."

"Well," replied Dick, "he shall not be either in difficulty or in danger for long, if our exertions can rescue him. Let us set about it, Jack, with good will, and if we do not succeed in finding out where this rascal, Phillip Manning has bestowed the young lady, it will, indeed, be an odd thing to me."

Where there's a will, there's certainly, in a vast number of cases, a way,

and so Dick and Jack set about placing themselves upon the track of Master Phillip.

They both remounted at the farm house, where Cicely was in comfort and security, and at a brisk trot went towards London. Jack seemed to be considering something, and suddenly he said—

“Money is a good thing to have plenty of in Newgate.”

“In good truth it is,” replied Dick. “The power of money by no means ceases at the vestibule of Newgate.”

“Well, then, I know it is quite impossible, what with one thing and another, that Claude can be even moderately well provided; so the only thing I can think of doing is to get him some.”

“I understand you,” said Dick, with a smile; “you would levy a contribution upon some traveller?”

“I would.”

“Don’t let me, then, be at all in your way; and if I can render you any assistance, depend upon me.”

“Many thanks. I am resolved to stop the first traveller me meet, who shall look worth the robbing. If there are two, I shall, of course, be glad for you to tackle one of them while I make free with the purse of the other; and who knows but we may be lucky enough to get him a good round sum by our exertions?”

Dick could not help smiling at the seriousness with which Jack spoke of their exertions, as though it was some legitimate business affair; but he said, jocosely—

“Yes, Jack, and I promise you that I will manage to keep up the supply to Claude, as long as he is not in a position to help himself. Who knows but some of these fine nights I may get a wound which may so far disable me as to make me fall into the hands of the Philistines myself?”

“It may happen to any of us,” said Jack.

“Well,” added Dick, “you may rely upon my coöperation with you, if it be necessary.”

Jack expressed his acknowledgments with infinite gravity, and the two made their way at an easy canter to London.

At that period, the environs of the metropolis, to the west and to the north in particular, presented a strikingly rural appearance, and you got quite among the houses before you lost the aspect of the country. To a greater extent than any other roads out of London, these environs now present rural aspects; for when the traveller reaches Hampstead or Acton, he might, by a very small stretch of imagination, fairly enough fancy himself many miles from the giant city.

Thus, then, although both Jack and Dick were very close to Oxford-street, they by no means despaired of meeting with some one whom they might ease of a little ready cash. They were passing through a long avenue of trees, not far off what is now called the New-road, leading towards Acton, when they became conscious of the sound of wheels behind them.

“Some one comes,” said Dick. “Look to your pistols, Jack.”

“I hear the sound.”

“Shall I leave to you the adventure if it be only one man?”

“Yes, if you will be so good, and another time I will give you the road in the same way.”

“Don’t mention that. I know your motive, and am quite contented that you should have all the spoil, upon this occasion, to take to our mutual friend, Claude.”

Dick accordingly left the side of Jack, and rode so close to the trees on one side of the road, and with so quiet a step, too, that it was next thing to impossible he could be seen.

Jack posted himself in the centre of the road.

In the course of a few minutes the sound of the approaching wheels became very distinct, and Jack’s experience told him that it was only a

two-wheeled vehicle that was coming. A feeling of great disappointment came over him, for it might only be some commercial traveller, after all, with nothing worth the stopping him for. Still he resolved upon making the experiment, and when the gig, for a gig it was, came sufficiently near, he called out—

“Stop!”

The voice in which he spoke was quite loud enough to have reached further than the gig and its occupant, and the result was an instant draw-up of the vehicle.

Jack galloped towards it, and when he got quite close, he said in calm determined tones—

“Your money, or your life and money both?”

The person who had been driving was evidently in such a state of terror that he could not speak; but Jack could hear his teeth chattering together like a pair of castanets.

“Comply with my demand quickly,” he said, “and you are in no danger.”

“I—I have only got eighteen-pence—”

“Pho! pho!”

“Oh, good Mr. Highwayman, it’s a melancholy fact, it is, indeed. I’m a very poor fellow, upon my word I am.”

“Who are you?” said Jack. “I fancy I have heard your voice before, somewhere; and if I know any good of you, I will let you off. I cannot see your face. Why don’t you have lights to your gig?”

“Yes—yes, good sir, I had.”

“Where are they, then?”

“They—they blowed out, good Mr. Highwayman. I’ve only got a small matter of eighteen-pence. Indeed that’s all.”

“We shall see. Who are you? Speak at once, or I shall take some means of loosening your tongue that you won’t like.”

“My name, sir, is—is Thomas.”

“Thomas what?”

“Brereton, sir. I’m usually called plain Tom Brereton, sir; of course, a gentleman like you, sir, may call me what he likes. Take my eighteen-pence, and spare my life.”

“Ah,” said Jack, “I thought I knew your voice. Why, you are a terrible rascal, Mr. Tom Brereton. I have heard of you. Do you know anything of Claude Duval?”

“I’m done, I’m done. I’m a dead man! I’m as good as done for. The Lord have mercy upon me. It’s Claude Duval himself. Oh, don’t cut me off in the flower of my youth, don’t; I’m too great a sinner, indeed I am, and ought to have time given me to repent.”

“You are a sinner I know,” said Jack; “but don’t be going off with the idea that you are stopped by Claude Duval, for I am not he. You ought to know that well enough by my voice, which is so strikingly different from his; nor is he in my company, nor in any way connected with this affair. Yet by chance I happen to know you are a great rascal, and have behaved yourself as badly as possible to him.”

“Oh, no, no, no——”

“I say yes.”

“Good Mr. Highwayman, you really are quite mistaken. You don’t know how fond I am of Claude Duval.”

“Fond of him?”

“Yes; I value him next to the apple of my eye, indeed I do. If you come near him, pray give my respects to him, and tell him how glad I shall always be to see him. Good night, sir, good night. I hope you may do a good stroke of business to-night. Good night, sir.”

“Move one inch, and I will blow your brains out.”

“Oh, dear—ch, dear. What’s that?”

“What?”

Quite involuntarily Jack looked in the direction that Tom Brereton pointed to, and at that moment, relying probably upon having a fast horse in the gig, Tom made a desperate attempt to be off, but Jack was one too many for him at that game, and darting to the horse's head, secured him in a moment.

"This is very uncivil of you," said Jack; "you wanted to leave me, did you, without any acknowledgments for your civility? but I will put it out of your power to play such another trick. I have wasted too much time upon you already."

Tom translated these words into a direct threat to murder him, and throwing himself out of the gig, he fell upon his knees in the road, crying—

"Spare my life, and take all I have. I have got £100 with me, good Mr. Highwayman, that I stole myself, for you can't think how I have been taken in in marrying."

"You deserve any fate," said Jack.

With this he at once cut the traces of the horse, and set the creature at liberty from the chaise, so that Tom Brereton had no opportunity of again trying to give him the slip. He then approached him, and clapping a pistol to his face, said—

"The money. Give it up at once."

"Here, sir. Here, good Mr. Highwayman. Here. Do you know, sir, I stole it from my wife, who stole it from the dressing room of a lady, that she has gone to live with as maid. I was going to make off with it, sir, if you please, out of the country; and I stole the gig too, sir, and I stole the horse."

"Why, you incorrigible rascal, you will tell me next that you stole the coat that is upon your back."

"Ah, sir. I stole the whole suit, that I did, sir."

"Then you can't blame me," said Jack. "You may depend upon my giving your compliments and kind regards to Claude Duval, if ever I should come across him, and in the meantime I wish you a very good night."

"Won't you give me back some of the money, sir?"

"Give you back some? How absurd. No, Mr. Tom Brereton, you must do the best you can with what you have left."

"Left! Gracious! I have not one farthing."

"Nonsense, you know you have eighteen-pence in change which you were kind enough to offer me, so don't tell me you have nothing. Good night."

Tom Brereton fell with a groan to the ground, and Jack galloped back to join Dick, who, by going at a very easy pace, gave him an opportunity of easily doing so.

"Success?" said Dick.

"Yes. Ample. £100 in gold."

"Hurrah, that is good. It will relieve Claude from many a disagreeable in Newgate, that otherwise, without money, he would be compelled to submit to. I congratulate you."

"Yes, and what makes it more pleasant by a great deal," said Jack, "is that I have taken it from an old enemy of Claude's, and a man whom I know to be one of the most contemptible scoundrels the world ever saw." [For a full history of this man see previous chapter.]

"That is better and better."

"It is; and now we have nothing to do, but to push on for London as quickly as possible, for I long to put myself into communication with Claude."

"Will you venture within the walls of Newgate?"

Jack gave a slight shudder, and then he replied—

"Yes, I will to see Claude; and perhaps it will do me good, by preventing the thought of that building being such a bugbear to my imagination as it is now."

"There can be no doubt of that," said Dick, "and I encourage your visit, for I am quite convinced Claude would not have told you in his letter it might be made with safety, unless he had had ample reason to say so."

"That is precisely my opinion."

By this time they had reached Oxford street, and Dick proposed that they should halt for a moment or two at a noted hostel on the left-hand side of the way called "Hercules's Club," where knights of the road were accustomed to bait.

"We shall hear the news of the day there," said Dick. "For my own part I am full of apprehension that Claude will not be able to preserve his incognito in Newgate; and in such a case, the whole aspect of affairs will be changed, and any visit to him might be attended with the most dangerous of all consequences."

"What?" said Jack.

"The arrest of the visitors. But here we are at the 'Hercules's Club,' and we will take a glass without dismounting, and ask the news of the landlord."

"Does he know you, Dick?"

"Perfectly well, and if he knew you likewise it would be no matter, for you would be as safe as you are now. But do not fancy that upon that account I am going to tell him a word about you. Your secret is your own, not mine."

Jack was quite satisfied with this assurance.

A very few moments brought them to the door of the hotel, which Dick had spoken of in such terms of commendation; and in answer to his call, a man appeared at the door, who said in rather a crusty tone.

"Who are you, I wonder?"

"Look again," said Dick.

"Eh? Bless my soul, yes it is you. Well, who would have thought of seeing you in this quarter of the world. Come in?"

"No, thank you. I can't come in. It is not my part of the country this, certainly. But I have business in London. Bring us out a cup of wine, such as I know you have at hand for a friend, and then we must be off again."

"That will I," said the landlord.

The wine was brought in an antique silver flagon, and Jack and Dick divided it between them. Then Dick, in a careless way, said to the landlord—

"Is there any news stirring?"

"No. None that I know of,"

"By-the-by, have you heard anything of Duval lately?"

"Only that he is still on the Western Road, that is all."

CHAPTER LXIV.

FROM this reply of the landlord's, both Dick and Jack were quite satisfied that up to that time Claude's incognito had not been blown upon. If he had been discovered in Newgate, the news would have got to no place with greater alacrity than to the "Hercules's Club."

"Thank you," said Dick, as he returned the empty flagon to the landlord. "The next time I come I hope I shall be able to step in, and have a gossip with you about old times."

"I hope so too," said the landlord; "you have been a good friend, Dick, to me and mine, and there is no man I should be more glad to see at all times."

Dick shook hands with him, and then Jack and he rode off at a rapid pace down Oxford street.

"I will take Claude the money, Jack," said Dick, "if you in the least way feel any repugnance in going into Newgate."

"No. I have made up my mind to it," said Jack; "and I am so bound up in the service of Claude, that I feel confident now I shall be able to go through with the affair."

"Very good. I am glad to hear you say so. We will find a place to put up our nags, and I will make what changes we think necessary in our costume; and we will, in a serious manner, undertake this job of unmasking the villany of Phillip Manning."

"And we shall succeed, Dick."

"In good truth it will go hard with us, as well as with others, if we don't; for a trifle don't stop me when once I undertake a thing."

"Nor shall it stop me."

"And in addition to my feelings," added Dick, "for Claude in this matter, and my great anxiety to see him safe out of the stone pitcher, in the Old Bailey, I have got so used to the road, and the free balmy air of the open country, and the sweet smell of the hay, and the songs of the birds, that it is quite a sacrifice for me to spend twenty-four hours in London."

"I, too," said Jack, "love the open air, and the birds, and the trees, and the flowers."

"Ay, Jack, as all must, who compare such beauties with the grimy town; but business, my friend, is business, and must be attended to. We will see Claude free, and then hurrah for the road again, and the open air. After all, Jack, what life is like ours?"

"What indeed?"

"We enjoy existence with very few of its cares. With a good steed, a pair of pops that can be depended on, and a light heart—we are happier than kings."

"Yes," said Jack, "I was once, but I am now spirit-broken."

"Not so, old fellow. You will come round again in good time, and the name of Sixteen-string Jack will yet be spoken as it was once spoken of. Why folks used to delay journeys on your account once upon a time; and you were as well known upon the Great North Road, as any old sign. It was always a question if any one came off a journey in that direction, 'Did you meet the famous highwayman, Sixteen-string Jack?'"

Jack's face glowed for a moment with the remembrance of old times, and he said in a voice of emotion—

"I never was grasping, or cruel either."

"No, Jack, I never heard that you were either. It is not in your nature to be cruel or grasping. But here we are."

"Where?"

"Why, close to Soho, where I will find you a lodging in which you can sleep securely, and where our cattle will be well taken care of. In the morning, then, you can make yourself up for your visit to Newgate; and after that we will be like bloodhounds upon the track of that scoundrel, who has got Claude into this mess."

"We will."

Jack fully expected to find Dick stop at some house of ordinary entertainment, the landlord of which he knew; but to his surprise Dick drew up at the door of a quiet looking house in Dean street, which, from its private and respectable exterior, looked as though it belonged to some people who were highly proper, and well to do in the world.

"Why surely you don't bait here?" said Jack.

"Yes," said Dick.

"Well, you know best, of course."

"I know the people, Jack. This is one of the safest cribs in all London. I don't mean to say that the master of this house will be quite delighted to see you and I; but for all that, he will pay us every attention in the world, and we shall be quite safe."

"Who is he?"

"I can better tell you, Jack, what he is than who he is. In plain terms, he keeps a fence."

"Ah, a receiver?"

"Yes, and one of the richest in London. He don't interfere with petty

spoil, nor is he at all known to petty thieves; but to such as I and Claude, and to such as you, Jack, he is quite a patron, and keeps his house open to us, although he does not wish any of us to come except upon an emergency; but of that he can be no judge; so he will make us welcome, fancying this is one."

"Must he know me?"

"He does know all you have to tell him, I suspect." "Indeed?"

"Yes, Jack; he told me the last time I saw him, although at that time I was far from believing it, that you were alive, and expressed a wish to see you, and a desire to be of what service to you he could. How he came by the secret of your resuscitation I know not; but such men as he have a thousand unknown sources of information. At all events, you may depend upon your absolute safety in his house."

Jack was a little shaken at the idea of his being known; but the assurances of his safety, which he knew Dick would be the last person in the world to make if he did not feel quite confident upon that subject, reconciled him.

"In that case then," said Jack, "I prefer that I should be named to him at once. If a man be trusted at all, let him be trusted wholly."

"That is good, both in principle and in practice, Jack," said Dick. "There is no knowing the mischief that results from half-confidence; I will at once introduce you to Josiah Franklin."

"Oh! is that his name?"

"Yes, and he is one of the most respected quakers in London."

"Quakers?"

Dick laughed.

"I thought, Jack," he said, "that would surprise you; but our friend here is a quaker. He knows Claude very well, and has upon more than one occasion accommodated him with a suit of quaker's apparel."

"I have seen him so attired," said Jack.

"Then he got the clothing from Franklin; and after that I hope you trust in his good faith, and in your own perfect safety, beyond a doubt."

"It was beyond a doubt before, Dick; and yet I am glad to hear that Claude knows and trusts this man. I wonder he never mentioned him to me."

"He could not. Franklin makes his intruders promise that they will not mention him to their nearest and dearest friends; and I should not now have dreamt for a moment of bringing you to his house, if he had not, as I have already mentioned, expressed a wish to see you."

Jack held Dick's bridle while he dismounted, and when Dick rung at the door bell, it was answered by one of the most serious-looking domestics that could be imagined.

"Is Mr. Franklin within?"

"Friend," said the servant, "hast thou a card?"

"Yes," said Dick.

He took a card from his pocket-book. it was an odd enough card, for there was nothing upon it but a diamond, such as is used in playing cards. In fact, he presented to the serious footman the ace of diamonds.

"Verily, humph!" said that personage. "Wilt thee walk in?"

"Yes, and my friend likewise."

"Has thy friend a card?"

"No, but he will have. It's all right. We want the horses taken care of for a day or so."

"Leave them to my care, friend, and thou shalt not be disappointed," said the serious domestic, without altering a muscle of his countenance.

Dick beckoned to Jack to come in, while the serious domestic called some one up from the lower part of the house, who took immediate charge of the cattle.

In another moment Jack and Dick were both in the passage or hall of the house, and the door was closed.

This house, which for many years was inhabited by Josiah Franklin, the

quaker, is still standing in Dean street, Soho. Perhaps the present proprietors would not thank us for pointing it out, so we will content ourselves by saying that it is a large one, and on the right hand side of the way going southward.

The hall—and it was not a mere passage as is too often the case, dignified by the name of one, but a really large space—was handsomely got up. Dingy-looking busts, with a respectable amount of dust upon them, stood grimly on brackets looking down upon the intruders; and some large pictures hung against the ample wall.

"I will announce thee, friend," said the serious domestic, "if thou wilt have patience for a short time."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Dick.

"Well," said Jack in a low voice, when they were alone in the hall, "this is a place worth knowing. I suppose Franklin makes it well worth his while?"

"Not a doubt of that. When a quaker is a rogue, he is an outrageous one, you may depend. The garb of sanctity in this world forms one of the most admirable cloaks for all sorts of iniquity."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Now, Jack, I look upon you and I as bold, honest men, compared to such a fellow as this Franklin. It is true that we say, 'Stand!' to a true man upon the king's highway, but we say it boldly, and he may have a shot at us for our pains; but there are thousands of men in this great city of London, who rob their neighbours with a smirk and a smile, and go to church regularly, who would, if you were to call them anything but honest men, be ready to leap down your throat."

Jack was rather amused at the vehemence of Dick, but he could not help fully agreeing with him in what he had just said. It was too true to be disputed.

In about three minutes the serious domestic came back to them, and said—

"If thou wilt follow me even to the room that is at the back of the dwelling, I will introduce thee to Mr. Franklin, as the vain and giddy call him, but to plain Josiah as he is called by the devout."

"Lead the way, then, you hypocritical rascal," said Dick.

The serious domestic did not seem at all put out of the way by these words. He only shook his head and uttered a sort of groan, that might be supposed to be deprecatory of the sinfulness of mankind in general.

Dick and Jack were presently ushered into a large, handsome room, situated at the back of the house, and they found there seated a small man, plainly attired in a quaker's costume, who rose at their entrance, and with a grave air said—

"Be seated, friends. Thou both art welcome. Leave us, Aminadab."

When the door was closed, Dick pointed to Jack, and said—

"This is Sixteen-string Jack."

The quaker did not suffer the least emotion to be visible upon his face, as he said—

"Friend, I am glad to see thee, to which end indeed I did express a wish to thy friend, Turpin, here. I heard that, notwithstanding thou hadst been hanged by the neck at the place called Tyburn, that thou wert still in the land of the living."

"Yes," said Jack. "I was recovered after execution."

"Truly friend, thy case is a singular one. Hast thou any swag?"

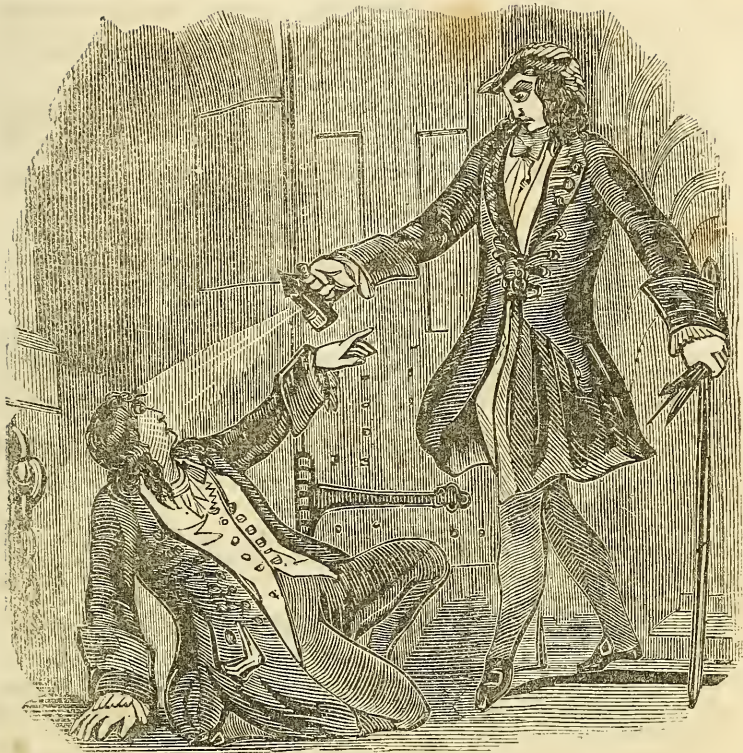
"No," said Jack; "I have nothing."

"No doubt, Turpin, thou hast some."

"Not a scrap," said Dick.

"Thou what the devil, friend Turpin, I ask thee, didst thou come here for? If thou hast no swag, d—n thee, why didst thou trouble me?"

"Be patient," said Turpin, "and I will tell you. Claude Duval is in the stone pitcher at last."



Claude, while Escaping from Newgate, encounters Phillip Manning.

A slight shade of increased colour at these words seemed to pass over the face of Franklin, but he did not speak.

"Yes," added Dick. "He is there, sure enough, and it is about that business that Jack and I, much otherwise against our own inclinations, have come to town."

"It is very strange," said Franklin, "that I did not know of this. Thou must, friend, be misinformed thyself. My information is generally tolerably close upon the fact. I will ring and inquire."

"Spare yourself the trouble," said Dick, arresting the hand of the quaker as it grasped a bell-rope. "Spare yourself the trouble, friend Franklin, and you will soon find out, from what I shall tell you, how it was that you knew nothing of it."

"Proceed, friend."

Dick, then, in as few words as possible, told him the whole story of how Claude had got into his present condition, and how, up to the last intelligence he and Jack had, he still continued, to preserve his incognito; Franklin listened with evident displeasure; and when Dick had done, he said—

"And, pray, what business was it of Claude Duval's if all the Phillip Mannings in the world ran off with all the Grace Mannings? His only duty to himself and to me was to stop them and ease them of their valuables by the way. I never heard of anything more absurd, friend, in all my life, than his conduct."

Plain Josiah Franklin was so incensed that he rose and paced the room for a few moments quite in a fume.

Dick let this feeling subside before he spoke again ; and then he said—

“It’s done, Franklin.”

“What dost thou say, friend?”

“I say, it’s done, now, and it is not the part of a wise man to fret and fume about the past. The future is our own, but the past is gone for ever, and may not be recalled.”

The quaker stopped short in front of Dick ; and then, after regarding him for a few moments attentively, he said—

“Thou art right, friend.”

“I knew you would see the thing in a proper light soon.”

“I do see it, and I see that Claude Duval will be hanged at Tyburn.”

“He is not yet even discovered,” said Jack.

“But he will be, friend.”

“I should not like to feel so confident of that,” said Dick. If Jack and I are, as I hope and trust we shall be, successful in tracing the hiding-place in which Phillip Manning has placed his fair young cousin Grace, all will be well. Three words from her lips will exculpate Claude, and his instant release, as the falsely accused John Smith, will follow.”

“No, it is too much to expect, friend,” said Franklin. “I look upon the fate of Claude Duval as settled.”

“Then mine is settled likewise,” said Jack.

“How dost thou mean, friend?”

“Why, I don’t intend to survive Claude. I will find my death in some desperate attempt to rescue him, even if it should be at the foot of the gallows itself. That is my determination ; and I care not who knows it, or hears me avow it.”

The quaker looked at Jack for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders, as he said—

“Every one to his taste, friend.”

“Come—come,” said Dick, “we need not quarrel about what any of us may do in the event of such a contingency. It may not happen, and if it does, it will then be time enough to think of it.”

“Exactly, friend,” said Franklin ; “and now I presume that Claude will want something in the way of help with money while he is in his present situation, and you have only to ascertain from him how much, and I will immediately produce it.”

“You will?” said Dick.

“Ay, friend, I will.”

“This is kind of you,” said Jack.

“Nay, friend,” added Franklin, “it is nothing out of the way. I am a man well to do, and I have made that which I now have by gentlemen of thy profession, friend ; so it is but fair that I should help thee and such as thee in the hour of need.”

“You have done yourself no harm, Mr. Franklin,” said Dick, “by the kind offer—for it is kind, let you say what you will of it. Claude will have plenty of money for all his wants in Newgate. All we require of you is a place of refuge for ourselves and our horses until we have traced this Phillip Manning, and so ferret out where he has bestowed the judge’s daughter.”

“That you shall have, friend. Think that my house is your own, and all within it at thy own disposal.”

“Many thanks—many thanks. Jack wants to go at once to see Claude in Newgate, and he wishes to be disguised.”

The quaker looked at Jack scrutinisingly for a few moments, and then he said—

“If thou wilt follow me, friend, I will show you the sort of disguise that I would recommend thee to put on.”

“Go, Jack,” said Dick ; “I will wait here.”

"Thou mayest wait with a perfect conviction of thy safety, friend Turpin, or thou mayest come with us."

"Then I will come with you, since I have the option."

The quaker led the way to the top of his house, and having selected a key from among several that he took from his pocket, he unlocked a back attic, which, all around it, was filled with presses, something like a linen-draper's shop, where every description of apparel was to be found, from the sooty habiliments of a sweep to the showy apparel of a general officer.

"Here, friend," he said, "I can make thee look like a very respectable grazier; and as to-morrow is market-day at Smithfield, it will favour the delusion, although I cannot quite comprehend how Claude has got leave to see whoever applies to visit him."

"His letter," said Jack, "says that the judge has got him such leave."

"Yes, friend, it says so, but——"

"You doubt it?"

"Indeed I do, friend. But here is the grazier's suit, which, to my mind will compare well with thy cast of countenance, to which I can impart a more ruddy tinge; and if any one speaks to thee, thou must talk much of south-downs and short horns, and such like matters, with which thy natural wit will surely furnish thee."

So saying, the quaker took from one of the presses the costume he had mentioned; and when Jack saw himself fully dressed, and his face tinged with a mixture that Franklin produced, he was indeed surprised, at the perfection of the disguise.

"This is capital," he said. "What do you think of it, Dick?"

"Simply that it is capital in its way. You are a genius, Mr. Franklin. Quite a genius."

"Nay, friend, I am a plain man, trying to make that which in this great christian country is worshipped by all, and thou wilt easily guess by that I mean money."

"It is true," said Dick.

"I will now go at once," said Jack. "Only tell me, Dick, where to meet you after my interview with Claude, and I will come to you."

"Let it be at the judge's house door. You have the correct address?"

"I have, and will be there."

Jack left the house of the quaker, feeling very easy about the before ticklish matter of keeping himself concealed as regarded identity from the inhabitants of Newgate, some of whom he well knew had a most marvellous faculty of recollecting any face they had once seen.

Dick took his way, dressed quietly in black, to the judge's house, where he thought that, either coming in or going out, there was a chance of seeing Phillip Manning.

We will accompany Jack to Newgate.

If we were to say that he felt no trepidation at all as he ascended the steps leading to the lobby of the prison, we should certainly be going far beyond the truth, for not only did Jack feel emotion, but it was considerable emotion.

The only thing that supported him at that moment, was the thought that it was for one whom he so much valued, as he did Claude Duval, that he was doing what he did.

"Courage," he whispered to himself. "All may be lost by one shrinking action. All may be gained by boldness."

He tapped at the wicket of the old prison.

"Hilloa!" said a turnkey, "what do you want? Have you lost a cow, and do you think it has strayed into Newgate?"

"No," said Jack. "I want to see John Smith."

"John Smith—John Smith. Humph! Do you think he wants to see you, old fellow?"

"I know he does. He sent for me."

"Here, Gutty," cried the turnkey, "you know all about this. It's some one for John Smith."

"All I know," said Gutty, "is that there's an order sticking up there in the governor's hand-writing to let anybody go and come during the regular hours to John Smith, and you know as much as that yourself."

"Come in, then," said the turnkey, admitting Jack, and then muttering to himself—"I wonder what's the use of anybody on the lock at all, if everybody is to come in and go out as they like? There used to be no such doings in old times. We never thought of letting anybody in till they tipped, and that handsomely too."

Now, Jack was resolved to set his mind at ease regarding his disguise, and to test thoroughly his own identity, by doing something after which nothing could come amiss. He knew the turnkey very well by sight, and he said to him—

"Do you remember Sixteen-string Jack?"

"Do I?" cried the man. "Don't I? What do you know about him, master, eh?"

"He stopped me once."

"Did he, and what did he take from thee?"

"A canvass bag with twenty-eight guineas in it; but when I told him the loss of all would distress me on the morrow, he gave me back five again."

"Ah, then, you were the man he did that to? I have heard the story before. Well, he was not one of the worst."

"Ah!" muttered the man they called Gutty, as he lighted a lantern to conduct Jack to Claude's room. "Ah, Sixteen-string Jack suffered at the Gate, and they say his ghost haunts Newgate now, and he has been seen in the long passages."

"That's very improbable," said Jack, as he followed Gutty from the vestibule, feeling convinced now that his disguise was perfect. The daring experiment he had tried had had all the effect he looked for from it. It put him quite at his ease, and he walked after Gutty with such an air, that no one for one moment could have supposed that he was in danger within the walls of Newgate.

"A visitor," said Gutty, as he opened Claude's room door.

Claude looked up, and for the moment did not know Jack, who walked in, saying—

"How are you, John?"

The voice at once assured him of who it was, and stretching out his hand, he said—

"Ah, how are you? it is very kind of you to come to visit me, so busy as you must be."

The door closed, and they heard the retreating footsteps of Gutty as he went growling down the passage. Then, and not till then, did Jack and Claude cordially shake hands like true and staunch old friends as they were, and Claude said to him—

"Jack, you are capitally made up; I did not know you."

"Yes," replied Jack, "I believe my disguise is good. Franklin, the quaker, got it up for me."

"Old Josiah? Then Dick took you there?"

"He did, Claude."

"Well, I should have done so, some day, when I got leave from him, only I did not know if he was at all aware of your singular story, and how far you would like me to mention it. But tell me, Jack, have you and Dick yet done anything in Grace's affair?"

"Not yet. Consider the time, Claude. My present business with you is to bring you this."

Jack laid a heavy purse upon the table.

"It was not wanted, Jack."

"Nay it is only £100. Give it about you freely to purchase all the indul-

gences and comforts that are not denied in Newgate any more than anywhere else in this world, to one who has money enough. You will be better pleased with it when you hear who it came from."

"Who, Jack?"

"None other than Tom Brereton."

"Tom Brereton? Impossible. That he should send me money, and that he should know I am here, is——"

"Stop—stop, Claude. You are getting hold of the wrong end of the stick with a vengeance. He neither sent the money to you, nor does he at all know you are here. I took it from him on the road."

"That is quite another thing."

"I met him after a determination to pick up something from the first passenger with a heavy purse, to pay your expenses in Newgate, and luckily he had this £100 by him, which he admitted he had himself stolen; therefore I took it with the smallest possible feeling of compunction, I assure you."

"Well, that was strange."

"It was; but be under no sort of apprehension as to his malice. He tried to say that it was you who robbed him, but I took good care to put that idea out of his head, so keep the money."

"I will have some of it, Jack. But how are you situated in that particular?"

"Well enough—well enough."

"I will only have half of it. You keep the other half, Jack. Of course it is a bad thing to have more than you want here, as it might provoke the cupidity of the officials, so fifty pounds will be all I will take."

Finding Claude firm upon this point, Jack yielded, and put fifty of the guineas in his pocket again.

After this was settled, he said—

"And now, Claude, Dick and I will not spare time or trouble in getting the better of that rascal Phillip Manning; so keep up your spirits, and hope for the best."

"I will, Jack; and yet——"

"Yet what, Claude?"

"It seems to me as if some great misfortune were impending over me. I am not, as you know, one of the desponding sort, and indeed I am always much more inclined to look upon the sunny, than the cloudy side of things; but I have a decided presentiment of evil."

Jack shook at this rather.

"Do not speak to me in that way, Claude," he said, "or you will upset me completely, and before I reach the gate I shall betray myself. I begin to feel already how artificial is the courage that has hitherto held me up."

The tone in which Jack spoke rather alarmed Claude, and he said to him in the most cheerful tone he could assume—

"Pho! pho! Jack; you know I am no believer in omens. Think nothing of the few idle words I have spoken. We shall be all right again upon the road, with a star-spangled sky above, many and many a time."

CHAPTER LXV.

SIXTEEN-STRING JACK had for so long a time been in the habit of thinking that whatever Claude said or did must assuredly be right, that he was easily depressed by a few mournful words; but then he was almost as easily raised up again in spirits, when Claude spoke to him cheerily.

Having thus brought Jack to a different state of feeling than that which, with its gloomy presages, might really have produced very bad consequences to them all, Claude was anxious to close an interview which at best was dangerous.

"Go now, Jack," he said, "and do your best. Remember that I wait here a prisoner until Grace Manning is in her father's arms again, and that from that moment I am well aware that I shall be an inhabitant of this place only for so long a time as will suffice for an order to be sent for my immediate release."

"Yes, Claude," said Jack. "We know and feel that, and knowing and feeling it, you, and you only, can imagine what an incentive to exertion that is to both Dick and I. Keep yourself in good spirits, Claude, and as you say, we shall soon enough be under the starlit sky of the open country, I hope. I am now going to meet Dick at the house of Judge Manning, upon which he is keeping a watch; and it is likely enough that even to-day we may succeed in doing something."

"Heaven speed you, Jack."

Jack knocked at the door of the room, until the turnkey, who was some distance off in the passage, heard him, and came to let him out. "Ah," said he with a discontented air. "Ah, then, here is fine doings in Newgate for folks to have who they like come and see 'em, and stay as long as they like, and nobody to say 'time's up!' I never seed the like."

"Nor I," said Claude, as he placed a guinea in the rough hand of the turnkey; "but if every visiter pays you as well as this, you will be making money like a physician, my friend, and I promise you that every visit to me will be equally productive to you."

The turnkey's mouth widened into a broad grin, as he said—

"Oh, that's quite another affair. You may have all the world, and his wife, come and see you if you like; and arter all, when you come to think, it's a hard thing that a cove as is shut up in a stone pitcher can't have his friends about him."

"Particularly," said Jack, "if he can pay well for the little indulgences."

"In course."

After this, the turnkey was all smiles and sweetness to Jack, and told him, as they traversed the narrow gloomy passages to the gate, "That he never seed sich a real gemman as his friend, Mr. Smith, and he only hoped as he (Jack) would make it a pint to come often and see him, just to keep his spirits up a bit, and tell him the news out o' doors."

And so, without the smallest accident, or any shadow of suspicion as to who he really was, Jack got out of Newgate, and found himself in the open streets of the city, after what may be truly called his perilous visit.

Of course, now, he had the greatest confidence in his disguise, and walked along with a much more calm and confident air than he had done before; all which was favourable to his situation, and the carrying out the character which he had assumed. He made his way as directly as he could to the square in which the judge resided.

The distance was not great, and Jack was well enough acquainted with London not to increase it by going an inch out of his way, so he soon, from a side-street, emerged into the square, very close to Judge Manning's house. The first thing he saw, was Dick standing nearly opposite, by the iron railings of the centre garden, apparently intently reading a bill that was stuck upon the face of a pump that was there.

Jack at once crossed over to him, and Dick, who had by a rapid side-glance seen him coming, said—

"Read this, Jack. I'll keep an eye on the judge's door while you do so."

Jack cast his eye upon the bill and found that it offered no less than £500 reward for the apprehension of either of three persons, one supposed to be the notorious Claude Duval, the other Richard Turpin, and the third unknown. They were all personally described, and it was stated at the foot of the bill, that the full amount of £1500 would be paid to any one who would lodge the whole three in any jail, without waiting for their conviction.

"What do you think of that, Jack?" said Dick; "ain't we a capital prize for some one! Here is £1000 standing by a pump in London, and not a soul to stretch out a hand to take it. That is really extraordinary, is it not?"

"It is no joke," said Jack.

"Joke? No. They who might try to earn the money, should find it no joke. I am well armed, and it is not two, or three, or four men that would find it a very easy task to fasten upon me."

"And I, too," said Jack, "would sell my life dearly."

"Of course. £500 sinks in value very much to a man with a bullet or two in his inside. But we are getting on well. How did you find Claude?"

"Quite well."

"And confident of his release, I hope?"

"Yes, he knows us well enough for that, Dick."

"He does, and he shall not be disappointed. The man we seek is in the judge's house now; I watched him in, and when he comes out, I will follow him, and you, Jack, will follow me."

"I will."

"Of course, it is just possible when he does come out, that he may not be going direct to visit Grace Manning in the place of concealment he has found for her; but visit her at some time or other during twenty-four hours, he surely will; and our duty will be, now that we have once set our eyes upon him, not to lose sight of him until he houses himself; and then if we feel that that is not the place of the concealment of the girl, we will wait for him until he comes out again, and stick to him like his shadow."

"Is that him, Dick?"

"Yes, yes!"

Phillip Manning came out of his uncle's house. There was a gloom upon his brow, and he glanced cautiously around him before he descended the steps. If ever a man was thoroughly wretched, not from regret at his own guilt, but from a conviction that it was, as regarded its promised and expected results, a failure, that man was Phillip Manning.

In the interview he had just had with his uncle, although, the old judge had not said one word to put him upon his guard, yet Phillip, with that acuteness of perception that often belongs to the guilty, had not failed to see that he was more than suspected, and that his uncle's faith was much shaken in the truth of the story that he had told of the abduction of Grace.

How the judge had been so shaken, he, Phillip, had no means of knowing; but the fact, combined with the firm resistance, and the dignified and indignant rejection of all terms of compromise by Grace herself, made Phillip endure the torments of the damned.

There he stood upon his uncle's door-step, a thorough picture of a foiled villain—of one who, for a great end to himself, had committed a great crime, but utterly failing in the object, was left standing, as it were, with nothing but the crime to console him.

While Phillip Manning stood there looking around him for food for suspicion, Dick was pumping away at the pump, while Jack was holding the iron ladle, and they both seemed only intent upon slaking their thirst.

The eyes of Phillip wandered over them, without exhibiting the slightest trace of suspicion, and then descending the remainder of the steps, he walked on.

"On," said Dick to Jack, "keep as far behind me as you can, so as to keep me in sight at all; and mind, Jack, if you see me go into a shop, or knock at the door of any house, or otherwise appear to give up the chase, it will be from a suspicion that I may be observed, and in that case you may go on and follow Phillip: I will soon come after you."

"I understand," said Jack.

By this time Phillip Manning had reached the corner of the square, and after casting around him one last glance, he seemed to be quite satisfied no one was dogging him, and he disappeared round the corner.

It was only for a moment that he was lost to the sight of Dick, for he was quickly at the corner, and then he saw Phillip walking down the street at a quick pace, without once looking behind him. From this time, the chase of the villain might be said fairly to have begun.

Dick kept about fifty paces behind him, and Jack about twenty paces behind Dick.

Phillip made for the northern part of London, and soon began to get into what was then open country, to the north of the New Road that is now. He then crossed the fields to Islington, which then was really quite a suburban district, and by no means of such close acquaintanceship with the bricks and mortar of London as it is now.

To any one not so well acquainted with the locality as Dick chanced to be, the task of following Phillip would have been one that now would have almost ensured detection, for it would look more than accidental for any one to keep upon the track of another, both in town and country. It was quite clear however to Dick, that Phillip was taking a short cut across the fields, where there was a foot-path, that would bring him out at a particular part of Islington, High-street, and he knew that by making a little detour, and traversing a lane which is now a street, he could reach that point.

He accordingly at once struck off from the direct pursuit of Phillip Manning.

Jack at first took this as a hint to him to follow, but Dick caught his eye for a moment, and gave him a sign to follow him, so that Phillip was to all appearance left quite alone; and if anything could tend to completely assure that doubtful character that he was safe, certainly this manoeuvre would.

In a few moments both Dick and Jack were together in the lane, which was a very verdant one, and on the side of it, next to the meadows that Phillip was traversing, there was a row of tall poplars, which completely hid the lane, and cast a sort of a twilight into it.

"He suspects nothing," said Jack.

"Nothing at all. We shall meet him again easily; but we must push on, for the route this way is nearly double that he is taking, and he walks fast." They ran swiftly for some distance, and then Dick said—

"If we get upon the bank here, we can take a peep at the rascal through the hedge without his being able at the distance he is off, to have the least chance of seeing us."

Jack was as anxious as Dick to look at Phillip, and when they had scrambled up the wild flower-decked bank, at the side of the lane, they easily, through the trees saw the whole extent of the meadows.

Phillip Manning had reached a stile and had stopped. His hand was up to his eyes to shade them, for the sun had peeped out, and he was looking southward. He seemed to be taking a long and earnest glance at the path he had come, in order thoroughly to assure himself that no one was upon his track. He sat upon the stile then, and took from his pocket a small telescope, and with that placed at his eye he made an accurate, and no doubt, very satisfactory examination of the route he had taken. Just for fear he might turn the telescope in the direction of the lane, and not knowing what its power might be, both Jack and Dick crouched down among the tall grass and flowering shrubbery, so that it would have been next to impossible for them to have been seen, even if Phillip had looked that way, which he did not.

To be sure, he did just take a sweeping kind of glance all around him with the telescope, but he did not fix his regards sufficiently long upon one spot to make our friends be in any danger of discovery in their secure hiding-place.

After this, Phillip, with all the air of a man who is thoroughly satisfied, pocketed his telescope and walked on.

"Now we shall have him," said Dick, "and I call all this very satisfactory, inasmuch as it assures us of one thing, which is, that we shall not have our trouble for nothing.

"Are you sure of that, Dick?"

"Pretty sure, Jack, unless we miss him. You may depend he would not take one half the trouble to assure himself that he is not followed, unless he were going upon some important errand; and I doubt if Master Phillip had

anything else upon his hands just now half so important as this affair in which we feel so deeply interested."

"Most probably not, Dick. I now see what you mean, and I do begin to think that our work is already half done."

"Without making too sure," said Dick, "I confess now to being sanguine; but we must put the best foot foremost now, Jack, for Phillip has not far to go to get to the opening into the High Street, and, if we lose him at all, it will be there."

They now proceeded at such a rate that they soon got quite clear of the lane, and skirting a piece of waste ground, they emerged into Islington, a little above what is now called the Green.

There they slackened their speed a little, and Dick went on in advance as before, Jack keeping upon one side of the way, so as to break the connection between them to the eye as much as possible.

Suddenly from a narrow turning, out came Phillip. Dick took no notice of him, although he was so close to him that he could have touched him; and to avoid any suspicion, he had to walk on past him. He well knew that Jack would see the necessity of such a step, and would keep an eye on Phillip.

So completely, however, was the rascal satisfied that he had come in perfect security, that he took no notice of any one, and had quite lost the air of lurking suspicion which had before been the grand characteristic of his proceedings. He walked in the most direct manner to a house with a little garden in front of it and a small green gate.

This place looked like a better sort of cottage; and they—for Dick had now looked round, after walking quite far enough to lull all suspicion—saw him take a key from his pocket, open the door, and go in.

Dick beckoned Jack to come to him.

"Well," he said, when they were together, "we have housed him at last. What do you think of that place, Jack, into which he has just now gone?"

"That it certainly is not where we shall find Grace Manning,"

"That is precisely my own opinion."

"It is too small and too public," added Jack; "she could alarm the whole neighbourhood from such a place as that by a cry for help. I think you will see Phillip come out again soon from that cottage; but we shall easily know it again."

"Oh, yes; and at another time, Jack, we will know all about it—but just now Phillip claims all our care. We will not lose sight of the green gate for a moment."

Even while they spoke they did not look at each other, but kept their regards upon that cottage; and this state of things lasted for about twenty minutes, when the cottage door opened, and an old woman, with a basket on her arm and pattens on, came out. She crossed the road, and disappeared down a lane opposite.

"Is it worth while asking any questions of that old dame?" said Jack to Dick.

"No, it would be dangerous. The grand thing, I take it, is to avoid exciting in the mind of Phillip the least certainty of his being watched—suspicion he already has; and if we follow and question yon old woman, how are we to prevent her from telling him of such a suspicious occurrence?"

"True enough, Dick—true enough. I only wish the rascal would come out, that's all."

They waited with the most exemplary patience for nearly a whole hour, but still there was not the least appearance of Phillip Manning emerging from the cottage.

"There is something more in this than we can just now divine," said Dick.

"We are done for this time somehow. He cannot have left the cottage by the back, for you see, Jack, it is open to the fields, and we must have seen him."

"Decidedly," said Jack.

"And by the front we know he has not. Confound it, he may be upon quite some other errand to day than that of calling upon poor Grace Manning."

"That is possible," said Jack. "But I begin to have an idea."

"For heaven's sake then, Jack, let me have the benefit of it at once, for if it be anything that will abridge the monotony of the watch we are keeping here, I fear in vain, it will be most welcome."

"You shall have it, Dick. I don't in the least wonder at your getting impatient, for nothing in the world can be so annoying as this sort of thing. You may laugh at me, but my idea is——"

"Hush! There's the old woman again."

"Humph," said Jack. "That is my idea."

"Why—why—what do you mean, Jack? Out with it."

"I think the old woman is Phillip Manning."

"The devil!"

They were both silent as they watched the seeming old woman with the basket and the pattens, cross the road-way to the little cottage with the green-gate. Then they saw her take a key from her pocket, after some rummaging, and place it in the lock. For one instant she held up her head, and took a glance around her.—It was Phillip!

"Done!" said Dick.

"For this time completely," said Jack; "but we have made a good two hours work of it for all that, for now we know Phillip's disguise, and that it must be somewhere close at hand to this spot that he keeps Grace a prisoner. You may depend that in that basket he took her provisions until this time to-morrow."

"Oh, yes," said Dick, in a tone of deep chagrin. "I see it all now. It is as plain as your hand before your eyes, Jack; but that you and I should be taken in is rather too bad. I warrant now if Claude had been with us he would have detected Phillip's disguise."

"He might. But the game is over for to-day, Dick."

"It is, I fear; and yet if you have no objection we will wait here, as we are well sheltered by the chestnut tree, and see Phillip go home again, and then I should like to go down the turning opposite, and see what one can."

"And so should I, Dick. We shall see what sort of a place it is, and where it leads to, at all events."

Phillip emerged from the cottage in his usual apparel in much less time than it had taken him to put on and perfect the disguise that had been good enough to deceive Jack and Dick. He did not look about him at all, but banging the door of the cottage to, he made the best of his way to town again, by the same way he had come.

When he was fairly out of sight, Dick and Jack emerged from the sheltered spot they had found among some chestnut-trees, and looked at the cottage.

"I would not disturb that place," said Dick. "If there be any one there, it may have the effect of putting Phillip on his guard; and if no one, all we could find would be his disguise, and that we know already. Let us go up the lane."

"Certainly."

They had now no trouble in looking after Phillip, so they could pay the most undivided attention to the place they were in. It was a pretty rural lane enough, with, at the top part of it, that is to say that part at which they entered, some small cottages that seemed to be in the possession of laundresses. Further on it seemed to straggle right away into the open country.

There was some open country at Islington then.

Feeling quite certain that none of the cottages at the entrance of the lane were worth their examination, Jack and Dick passed on at a quick pace until they got clear of the houses, and reached a stile that seemed to go into the meadows. There they both paused.

"This voyage of discovery," said Jack, "does not seem to promise many results, Dick."

"It does not, indeed. I can see chimney pots among the trees, yonder; but it is rather an awkward thing to go to a house, and say, 'Have you got a young lady a prisoner here? and does a man, disguised as an old woman, come to see her?'"

"Rather awkward, indeed," said Jack. "It is tolerably clear to me, Dick, that our best course most decidedly is to wait until to-morrow, and then come here and follow Phillip. We know he comes down this lane."

"Yes, and the plan will be to wait in the lane, Jack. Let us pitch upon some spot now that we are here, that we can come to direct to-morrow, and wait until the rascal arrives."

They crossed the stile with this intent, and soon found a kind of copse, in the intricacies of which they could be effectually concealed, while it did not prevent them from looking out and keeping a good watch upon the stile, over which they had very little doubt that they should, on the morrow have the satisfaction of seeing Phillip Manning get.

Having settled all this, then, as far as they could, they felt that their presence there was no longer required, and that their best way was to proceed to London again at once. They made for the quaker's house in Dean Street, Soho.

They found the "friend" anxious concerning them, as they had been absent for a much longer period of time than he or they had expected; for when Dick had gone to wait for Jack in the square where the judge lived, he had no idea that he should so readily light upon Phillip Manning.

"Friend," said Franklin, "I began to think thee and thy friend Jack had fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

"Oh no," said Dick, "we are making progress of a satisfactory kind, as you will admit when you hear what I have to tell you."

"It is ill talking upon an empty stomach, and with a dry throat, friend," said the quaker—"if thou wilt permit me, I will provide thee with a resource against both of these evils."

He rang a bell, and ordered a substantial repast for Dick and Jack, together with a couple of bottles of rare old wine, and he would not permit them to fatigue themselves by telling him their news, until they were thoroughly refreshed.

"I am, no doubt," he said, "friends, anxious enough to hear all that thou mayst have to say, but I am much more anxious that thy strength and thy courage should be kept up, for really now there are so few good men upon the road, that I cannot afford to lose either of thee."

Neither Dick nor Jack could help laughing at the business-like view which the quaker took of the affair, and at the way in which he accounted for his profuse hospitality, which many men would have tried to make a kind of merit of for its own sake. Franklin however was far above any such petty feelings, and he found his account in letting the highwaymen and cracksmen who dealt with him know that the assistance he rendered them was merely a matter of business, and had no other support or foundation.

When one of the bottles of wine was gone, and the other dipped into, Dick recounted to him all that had happened, to which he lent the most attentive ear; and when Dick had finished, he said—

"Thou must be cautious, friend."

"How?"

"Why from all I can hear of this Phillip Manning, he is one who will kill."

"Kill!" exclaimed Dick, kill! And do you fancy for one moment, Mr. Franklin, that I am afraid of his killing propensities? and I am sure I may say as much for Jack here. We don't care one straw about the malice or the resistance of such a fellow as that, I assure you."

"Now, friend," added the quaker, "that thou hast had thy say, allow me to state that I was not afraid of Phillip Manning killing thee or thy friend

Jack of the Sixteen-strings. It was the young maiden called Grace that I spoke of."

"You are right, Mr. Franklin," cried Jack. "The same thought has more than once come across me, giving me a cold shudder as it did so. I think he is just the man to murder the young thing, if he found all his villany upon the point of being discovered."

"I really did not think of that," said Dick. "Pardon me, Mr. Franklin. It is a thing of great importance, and I thank you for the hint. I will take good care it is well seen to. It would be too terrible."

CHAPTER LXVI.

TINGLE! Tingle! Tingle!

"What's that?" said Dick.

There was just a slight change of color upon the face of the quaker for a moment, and then he said, in a quiet voice—

"It is a warning, that's all. It is only a warning. You have been traced here by some means: you are either known or suspected I cannot say which. Truly the Philistines are at hand even now."

"The deuce they are!" said Dick, as he sprang from his seat. "What's to be done?"

"Nothing, friend, just now, by violence," said the quaker. "Everything, probably, by discretion. Please to remain precisely where you both are, until I come to you again. You will consult your safety by so doing, whereas, by removing from this room, thou may'st remove to thy own destruction."

With these words, the quaker rose, and left the room in a moment, Jack and Dick remaining, staring at each other, rather in a state of amazement.

"What shall we do?" said Dick.

"As he says," replied Jack.

"But—but I don't like this state of inaction. Did you see his face change colour when the bell rang? Do you know, Jack, I begin to have my suspicions."

"I have none. You ought to know Franklin much better than I do, Dick, so that of course, as far as that goes, you are the best judge by a great deal; but I do not myself entertain anything in the shape of a doubt of his fidelity to us. I feel that all his interests must be the other way."

"You have convinced me, Jack. We will wait here, although I had rather know what was going on below. Let us listen at the stair-head. There can be no harm in that you know, Jack. Come on. Are you a good one at over-hearing anything some distance off?"

"Pretty well."

They opened the door of the room quite carefully, and crept on to the landing-place of the stairs. Even to do this much was in contradiction of the express recommendation of Franklin; but something must be allowed for men placed in the exceedingly ticklish situation of Dick and Jack. They could hear nothing for some time but the murmur of two voices; but then they found Franklin and some other person were ascending the staircase together, and talking as they came on. They both turned into a room before they got to the height that Dick and Jack were.

"Did you know the companion of the quaker?" said Dick in a low, hissing whisper, to Jack.

"No."

"It was Granby, the informer. He is an officer, but he goes by the name of Granby, the informer, because he makes all his captures and transacts all his business by treachery. He is rich, and he will pay two-thirds of what he will get by the job for the apprehension of any one by treachery, rather than attempt it openly and by force."

"Say no more," said Jack. "I have heard of the man. What do you suppose his errand is here?"

"Of course to see if he cannot make terms with the quaker. Stay here, Jack. I have more than once, perhaps very wrongfully, had a slight fancy—suspicion one can hardly call it—that Franklin may, upon some odd occasion, retire from business, and that, preparatory to so doing, he may want to dispose of his stock in trade: do you understand me?"

"Ay; and his stock," said Jack, "you would say, consists of such men as we are."

"Yes; cracksmen and knights of the road, as we are. Once for all, then, I should like to satisfy myself; so I will step down and listen to his conversation with Granby if I can."

Dick took off his boots, and went very softly down the stairs on his stocking soles. He reached the door of the room into which the quaker and the officer had gone, and applying his ear quite close to the keyhole, he found that after a few moments, he could hear pretty nearly every word that was spoken by the parties within.

The officer was speaking, and Dick heard him say, in a clear and very earnest tone of voice—

"Now, Mr. Franklin, it is quite needless to tell you that the police have had an eye upon your house for some time; and strange as you may think it, it is I who have saved you. You may look incredulous. Perhaps, if I were in your position, I should likewise; but there is a why and a wherefore for everything in this world, and I will soon explain it all to you."

"Really, friend," replied Franklin, "I shall be much indebted to thee, indeed, to explain it to me, for, as yet, friend, I am most truly and lamentably in the dark with respect to thy reasoning."

"Are you?"

"Yes, friend; and I beg that thou wilt go on with all convenient expedition with thy promised explanation."

"Ah, you are a deep card," said Granby.

"Eh, friend? A card?"

"Well, well, I don't expect that all at once you are going to drop into my mouth, Mr. Franklin. I tell you that more than one officer has had his eye upon this house, but I have always fobbed them off in some way or another, so that you have really hardly been at all disturbed—eh?"

"Humph!" said Franklin.

"Well, well," continued Granby, "I see you are a man of business, and I like you all the better for it. You will understand what I have got to propose in the right spirit. I have looked upon you as a nice little piece of property in my way for these last three years, and I think the time has now come, do you know, to realise you. Ha! You understand?"

"No, friend."

"Come, come, Mr. Franklin—you are joking."

"Friend, I can conscientiously aver that I never made a joke in my life, and that, knowingly, I never shall make one. If thou art joking, friend, thou hast come to the wrong party to show thy wit, for I assure thee thou wilt not get from me the ghost of a smile, friend."

"Ha, ha!" said Granby, with a forced laugh; "upon my life you are a strange man—you are, indeed; but come, you and I must understand each other soon. If you don't make terms with me you will have a rough search in your house at all sorts of odd times when you least expect it. All the officers have great faith in what I say. They think I have means of getting information that they know nothing of. And they are right. I have such means. You are all right and snug now, I tell you, for I have fobbed them off just because there being no one to settle with but me, you might afford to be liberal."

"If I were assured of that——" said Franklin.

"Oh, that's the point, is it?" cried Granby. "Well, I hardly know how

I am to assure you of it. But you must see by my way that I am no fool, you know, and is it likely that I would let any one else have a share in the affair, when I could keep it all to myself? Now I tell you I know you harbour the great guns here now and then; fellows with £500 and, at odd times, £1000 reward hanging over their heads. The small fry don't come to you, and that's why I want to transact business with you. Now, at a word, I will go your halves."

"Halves in what, friend?"

"Hang it! you understand. How jolly green we are all of a sudden.—Ha! ha!"

"Thy saying 'Ha! ha!' and talking about green affairs, friend, does not enlighten me in the least."

"Don't it? Well, then, when you have a fellow snug here, for whom there is a good reward—anything over £100 will be worth while—you give me the office. I wont take him in your house or near it, but you give me sufficient information, and when I nab him you shall have your half down."

"Down, friend?"

"Yes, down."

"Before you get him tucked up, friend?"

"Yes. I'll give you a cheque for the amount. Everybody knows Jack Granby's cheque is a bank-note."

"Humph!"

"Is it a bargain?"

"Wilt thou stand half the forty-pound blood-money likewise, friend, when the individual whom I may be instrumental in giving up to thee is duly suspended by the neck until he be dead, friend?"

"I will—I will. That will be twenty-pound more always. Come, is it a bargain? I will stand half the blood-money, though it is rather a hard bargain to drive."

"Down, friend?"

"Yes down. Down on the nail."

"Of course, friend, then I consent. How could you doubt for one moment that I would? Good gracious, friend, I think the offer a most liberal one, especially as I am to get my half down; and of course, friend, as my house is to be the great rat-trap, you will be careful not to let the animals suspect it."

"Oh, trust me for that. It's a bargain? Give us your hand upon it!"

"Friend, I do not see the least occasion for giving thee my hand because we have agreed to be two thundering rogues, friend. Let us profit by our infernal iniquity, friend, and have, at the same time, if it be all the same to thee, friend, the most hearty contempt and abhorrence of each other, verily."

"Well, you are one of the oddest fellows, if not absolutely the very oddest, that I ever heard of."

"Do you really think so, friend?"

"In faith I do; but that's nothing. We have made our bargain, and I am glad enough of it for one. It will be to the profit of both of us; and if in the next twelve-months we don't make an outrageous good thing of it, I am much mistaken."

"Truly, friend, the speculation looks well," said Franklin; "and I should like a little memorandum of it, for the purpose of making which, friend, I will presently get pen, and ink, and paper. But yet I have many doubts."

"About what? Not about my good faith towards you, I hope? for if you have, the sooner you dismiss them the better. There is nothing so well calculated to keep men faithful to each other as mutual interest."

"No, friend Granby, I have not the least doubt of thy good faith, so far as thy intentions go; but, even now, I fear that thy visit may bring down upon me and my house inquiry; and induce, perhaps, other of your fraternity to visit me.—Nay, the mere fact of thy visit to-day will act as a kind of provocation to induce some one else to come."

"Make yourself easy about that."

"But how?"

"Well, I will tell you. Thinking of course that you, as a man of business, would have the good sense to make a proper arrangement with me, I took the greatest precaution to induce everybody to think I was going somewhere else.—Even my wife thinks I have gone down the river upon some business. I believe you will admit that I am cunning enough, Mr. Franklin?"

"Indeed, friend, thou art as cunning as a badger."

"Ha! ha! Then all your scruples are removed now?"

"Completely, friend, and I am quite decided. I may almost say that I look upon thy visit here as quite providential, and the pains that thou hast taken to conceal it, so that thou should'st not be traced to this house, are really, friend, quite delightful to think of."

"Well, well," said the highly gratified officer. "All's right. I rather think that when you and I combine for any purpose, it would take the devil himself to get the better of us. Ha! ha! ha! I am so glad I came, you can't think; I never felt so pleased with myself, or so comfortable in all my life, really, upon my word."

Dick thought now that it was high time to get up stairs again, for he expected the quaker might come up for pen, ink and paper, with which he wished to make the memorandum he spoke of to the officer. When Dick reached the landing, he whispered to Jack,—

"We are sold."

"Sold?" said Jack. "What do you mean by that?"

"Simply that our friend, Franklin, has even now made a bargain with an officer to give us up for one-half of the reward. You look to your pistols, Jack, and I will look to mine. They shall find that two to two is no odds; and if they don't bid the world good night, it shall be no fault of mine this day."

While Dick uttered these words, Jack looked at him in perfect astonishment. He found the greatest difficulty in bringing himself to believe in the perfidy of Franklin, and he said with earnestness—

"It's a fact. I heard it with my own ears. It is no opinion, no surmise. It is a fact. We are bought and sold."

"Then, Dick, I think we will make them repent of their bargain. Only say what you think is best to be done, and I will place myself entirely under your direction in the matter."

"Are your pistols fit for active service, Jack?"

"They are. I have only fresh-primed them a little while ago, and my hand is unusually steady. Dick, I feel that I am fit for anything, for if we fall, of course poor Claude falls likewise, for who will find out Phillip Manning, and restore Grace to her father, if we do not?"

"You are right enough there, Jack. What I propose is, then, that we go down stairs, and shoot them both. The quaker has gone to get writing materials to make a memorandum of his infamous bargain with the officer, respecting not only a treacherous giving up of us, but of all who may come here, relying upon him for safety. He has himself said, that this house shall be a sort of rat-trap; but I think he will find that we decline being the rats. Come on. I will shoot the quaker, and you may shoot the other."

"Agreed—agreed. It is for Claude as well as for ourselves."

If it had not been for his feeling towards Claude, there can be very little doubt but that Jack would have shrunk from this deed of retributive justice, which the sterner nature of Dick suggested; but he felt certain that Claude's fate would be sealed if he and Dick were not at liberty to trace out Grace Manning, and so triumphantly vindicate him from the charge brought against him by Phillip Manning. Hence, then, although with a certain degree of reluctance, Jack followed Dick down the stairs with a well-loaded pistol in his hand.

When they reached the landing below, Dick whispered to him—

"It would be a great thing, Jack, would it not, to get the document, which will at any time prove the treachery against which we are now armed. Would it not?"

"I should like by all means," said Jack, "to have such a written justification of this fearfully necessary deed, Dick."

"You shall have it. We will listen a moment."

They did listen, but rather to their surprise, all was most profoundly still within the room where the secret conference had taken place between the quaker and the officer. After a few moments, both Dick and Jack began to think that their prey had escaped them.

They looked at each other for a moment or two, as though each were anxious to read what the other thought by the expression of his face, and then Dick laid his hand on the handle of the door, and whispered—

"Come on."

He opened the door, and at once dashed into the room with the pistol in his hand. The quaker alone was there. He was standing by the window, very quietly and composedly washing his hands in a basin that, when the hinged-top of the window-seat was down, was completely concealed. The expression of his countenance, as he glanced upon Dick and Jack, was appalling. All the mild, quiet, firmness of look, which was his usual characteristic, had fled, and his every feature was indicative of passion. His eyes were flashing, and indeed, as he then stood with his coat off, no one not well acquainted with his features, could for a moment have ventured upon his recognition.

"Well," he said sternly, "is this obeying my orders?"

"You are a villain," said Dick.

"Villain in your teeth, highway robber," he replied. "How dare you apply such a term to me? You are only existing upon sufferance."

"Where is your companion in guilt? Where is he with whom you have made an alliance for our blood?"

"Oh, you are a listener at keyholes, are you?" said Franklin. "Only wait until I have washed my hands, and I will soon answer you."

"I came here," said Dick, "to shoot you, and I don't know what hinders me at this moment."

"You are afraid," said the quaker, drying his hands very deliberately upon a large towel. "You are afraid—that's the reason, friend, why thou dost not do it."

He was rapidly recovering his usual manner.

"Afraid?" said Dick, as he advanced two steps. "Afraid?"

"Yes, friend. A brave man is always afraid to do a base and cowardly action."

Dick slowly lowered his hand, as he said—

"You are a riddle. What am I to think? I heard enough to convince any one of your treachery; even now, for all I know, the officer Granby, may have left the house, only for the purpose of concocting measures for our apprehension."

"He has not left the house, friend."

"Where is he then?"

"Through that half-open door, friend, thou wilt find him."

"Jack," said Dick, "he is your victim, shoot him if you see him there, while I keep an eye upon our friend here."

Jack passed through the half-open doorway, and then in a moment he came back with agitation in his looks—

"He is there, indeed," he said, "but he is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, Dick. He lies in his blood."

"And this, friend, is some of it," said the quaker, as he pointed to the water in the wash-hand basin, which was of an ensanguined tinge. "This is some of it!"



The Valiant Innkeeper.

At that moment the face of Franklin again changed to the awful expression that it had worn at the moment that Dick and Jack had made their way so roughly into the apartment; but it was but transient; gradually subsiding, he looked cold and quiet as usual. Dick hastily made his way to the adjoining room to make sure that Jack had not been mistaken, but there he saw Granby lying in a pool of blood, although he could not well perceive by what means he had come by his death. The face was uninjured, but it had upon it an awful expression of agony, as it was upturned to the ceiling. The eyes were fixed and opaque, and the hair hung in disordered masses, partially dabbled in blood.

Dick made the best of his way back to the other room, and in a voice indicative of emotion, he said—

“Franklin, what is the meaning of this?”

“He,” said the quaker, proceeding towards the dead body, “he would tell you if he had a tongue that he could wag now.”

“But—but——”

“Tush! The explanation stares thee in the face, friend. That man insulted me by an offer, that it appears you overheard. Well, he has signed and sealed it now with his blood. Are you satisfied?”

“I am, indeed. You have killed him instead of allowing him to betray us. We are safe, and we owe it to you. How can I, for it was all my saying, how can I sufficiently apologize to you for my most unjust suspicions of you?”

“Say no more about it. It was very wrong and very imprudent of you to come out of the room above at all; but as you did come, and it has turned out that no particular mischief has resulted from it, let it drop. Our friend, Granby, still has to be disposed of. He was the most dangerous man to me in all London; and now I can breathe a little freely that he is no more. Mark me, friends, I do not consider this to be a murder, although the law would. Come.”

Dick and Jack followed the quaker, with amazement at his calmness so immediately after such an act. He pointed to the body, saying—“Drag it aside.”

Although with reluctance, Dick took hold of the heels of the dead man and dragged him aside, when Franklin, by stamping upon one of the floor-boards, where there appeared only to be a simple joining of two pieces, caused it to lift up at the end, and after displacing that one board, he lifted several others with ease, disclosing an opening right through the floor to an immense depth below.

“This goes to the cellars, friends,” he said, “and there Mr. Granby may lie and rot, or be food for rats. I hear them at times screaming and fighting far down below. Be so good as to pitch him down, friend Jack of the sixteen strings.”

“Don’t ask me,” said Jack, “I could not touch him for the world. If he were alive you would not find me backward in grappling with him; but now that he is no more, I should not like to touch him with the top of my boot.”

“Nay, friend, I particularly wish you to do it. I killed him. Dick, here, has already dragged him from above the trap, and it is thy duty, friend, to poke him down.”

“If it come at all in the shape of a duty,” said Jack, “I’ll kick him down; so that you shall not say that I had no hand in the business as well as yourself.”

With this, Jack urged the dead body to the opening with his foot, and soon overbalancing it, away it went out of sight into the depths below. Franklin carefully replaced the boards, and then remarking that he should have to get out the stains of blood, and that he knew a mode of doing that, he led the way to the other apartment.

“How did you kill him?” said Jack.

“Do not trouble thyself, friend, to ask unnecessary questions,” replied the quaker. “Let it content thee that he is dead, friend.”

* * * * *

While all this was transacting at the quaker’s house in Dean Street, Soho, the situation of Grace Manning was getting most critical. If any one had peeped into a small chamber in the house where Phillip Manning had a private lodging in the city, somewhere at the back of where the post office now stands, they would have seen that he was rather singularly occupied.

“This lodging of his consisted of but one room, in which was a sofa bedstead; and there it was that, known only by the name of Smith, he used to commit his villainies. At this time, however, he was very differently employed, and he is worth looking at.

At a table by the window he sits, with before him a small glass apparatus for distillation, such as is used for chemical purposes, consisting of a retort and a receiver, well supported by a stand. Under the bulb of the retort was

a spirit lamp, flickering and burning with its peculiar faint flame. Phillip was resting with his chin upon his fists, and his elbows upon the table. He was watching the boiling up of some liquid in the bulb of the retort, in which, too, there were some herbs.

"This will do," he muttered. "As soon as a great part of the water has gone out in vapour, what remains will be a tolerably concentrated production from the poisonous herbs I have collected; and they must destroy life. Ha! ha! I am not so foolish as to purchase poison—I make it!"

His face at that moment was perfectly diabolical in its satanic expression.

After a time he removed the spirit lamp from under the retort, and put upon it its glass cap, and extinguished it; then he poured cold water over the bulb of the retort to cool it, and was soon able to handle it. He took from it three drops of a greenish thick fluid, and poured them one by one into a pint bottle of wine. He then held the wine up to the light, and looked at it scrutinizingly.

"No," he said, "it is full as clear as it was, and yet what a deadly draught it will be. What an enemy to life would but a small portion of the liquor now become. She shall bid adieu to the world by its means. I will not try to induce her to take it, but I will leave it with her, and at some moment when she feels faint both in body and in spirit she will fancy that a glass of the wine will revive her; and then, Grace, you will be no more, and I shall escape from the perplexity of an affair which, if it go on much longer, will be certain to end in my destruction."

He carefully corked the bottle, and then dashed dust upon it to give it an appearance of age. He dragged it through a cobweb that was in a corner by the roof of his room, and then he said—"This shall be the death draught of my fair cousin, Grace."

CHAPTER LXVII.

We will take a look at Grace Manning in the prison-house to which the villany of her cousin Phillip had consigned her in that sweet spring-tide of her existence. She almost began to despair of aid.

It was a room in which she was now confined. Phillip had blindfolded her thrice, and changed the apartment in which he kept her prisoner. He was afraid to let her be long in one place, partly for fear she would concoct some plan of escape from it, and partly lest some one else might find her. Each of these times that he had changed her abode he had taken her into the open air to make her believe that she had gone to another house entirely; but she had smelt the odour of flowers, and she felt quite convinced from the feel of the ground, and the character of the air, that she had only been traversing a garden, no doubt attached to the house in which she had been in the first instance brought.

From all this manœuvring one thing was quite evident, if even other circumstances had not tended to confirm it, and that was, that Phillip Manning was in a state of the greatest fear and tribulation for the consequences of his criminality.

Upon the occasion of his last visit to the house in which he had her in durance—that visit, in the making of which he had successfully foiled both Jack and Dick—he had used the most awful threats towards her

"Your life," he said, "is in your own hands. You will, if you please, easily force me to become your executioner. If you are so vindictive as still to assert you will ruin me with your father, by telling him all that has really happened, what can you expect but that, in common self defence, I should prefer to kill you in this place?"

"I will tell the truth, and the whole truth," said Grace; "Nothing shall induce me to depart from it."

"Wretched girl, do you not tremble?"

"No, Phillip; but I can well perceive that you do so."

"And so, you even dare to taunt me?"

"It is not taunting. I tell you that I will intercede for you with my father, if, even now, you restore me to him. I will say for you, in asking him for mercy, what I can."

"Mercy! What do you mean by mercy? What do you expect as the result of your intercession? tell me that; and let me judge of what I am to expect from you. Speak to me freely—your life hangs upon a thread."

"By my intercession I hope that my father may be induced to spare you from that legal prosecution which your crimes merit. I do not know what the laws of your country would condemn you to for this great iniquity, but I would make an effort to spare you that."

"Yes, and leave me to disgrace and destitution!"

"It is you, Phillip, who will leave yourself to disgrace. No one can lift the disgrace of such acts as yours off the shoulders of him who perpetrates them. As for destitution, I do not think that my father would let you starve, whatever might be his abhorrence of your crimes. Perhaps in some other land you might live a life of repentance."

Phillip laughed loudly and discordantly.

"No, girl," he said; "upon one condition only will I place you in your father's arms: it is, that you will point to me as your preserver, and accuse that man who is now in Newgate upon the charge of your abduction, of really being the person who tore you from home. I will then ask your father for a sufficient sum of money, which no doubt his grateful feelings will prompt him to give me, and with it I will leave England for ever. When I am gone you can tell what tale you like; so that, after all, it will only be costing your father a few thousands, and that is no harm to him."

"No, Phillip, no."

"You will not?"

"I dare not."

"What do you mean by dare not? Who is to hinder you, fool that you are? What do you mean by dare not?"

"I dare not go to my father with an untruth upon my lips, even for one hour."

"Then die in your obstinacy, idiot, for die you shall!"

"Heaven help me!"

"Heaven! Ha! ha! Wait for Heaven to help you until you lie and rot. Ha! ha! I have you now; but it is only to bind more tightly around you the meshes of my power, and to take more effectual steps for the destruction of him who had the audacity to interfere with me in the country lane. Tomorrow I will visit you again, and if I do not find you more tractable, that day will be your last in this world."

With these words, and without waiting for an answer, for anything she said was gall and wormwood to him, he left the house, and full of dark and evil thoughts he made his way to London again.

It was after this visit to Grace, that feeling how utterly impossible it was to move her from her fixed integrity of thought and action, he fairly made up his mind to her murder. Then it was that he drugged the wine, which he hoped would be a speedy means of relieving him from her presence in this world.

Notwithstanding all that was happening to them, in the meantime, Jack and Dick were not unmindful of the principal business they had in hand, namely, the rescue of Claude from Newgate, by the thorough establishment of his innocence as regarded the abduction of Grace.

By establishing that fact, they not only anticipated an instant order from Judge Manning for his release, but they hoped that in the judge they should make for him (Claude) such a friend, as upon some other important occasion might really stand him in good stead.

They were both at the spot in Islington, from whence they could command a good view of the cottage, where Phillip Manning went to put on his disguise, long before the hour at which they expected him to make his appearance there.

"Do you know, Dick," said Jack, "I scarcely ever felt so nervous in all my life as I do now, about the probable fate of that young girl. It seems as if something whispered to me, that to a certainty that rascal would take her life in spite of us.

"No, no, Jack, if he come here, you may depend she yet lives; and so sure as he does come she shall be saved, for we can then take pretty good care not to lose sight of the villain. I grant you if he were not to come, I should have the most dismal forebodings upon the subject."

"Alas! Dick, if you began to have forebodings, I should feel and have certainties. I hope to God it will not be so. Ah! what a delightful thing. There he is, Dick."

"Sure enough. All's right. Yes, that is the fellow. What has he got in that bag, I wonder?"

"Some provisions, or a fresh disguise for himself."

"Perhaps both, Jack; but as we are pretty sure there is no one in that bit of a crib, which we may call for convenience sake Phillip's cottage, but himself, we will follow whoever comes out of it, let them be in appearance what they may. We have already had evidence that Master Phillip is a skilful actor, and we positively must not let him do us again, Jack."

"We will not."

Phillip advanced with the utmost possible caution. He seemed quite to have some sort of notion that he was being followed, for he looked many times behind him, and passed the cottage twice before he ventured upon going up to the door of it, and opening it with the key he took from his pocket.

When he did open the door though, he disappeared within the cottage, and closed it again with truly marvellous celerity.

"Good," said Dick. "We have him now, Jack, as safely as though he were in our hands. I will now go up the lane opposite and hide for him, while you come after him, but at such a distance as shall take off all idea that you are after him. Don't you look for me, as I will keep an eye upon you as you come up the lane, and join you in good time."

"That will do, Dick. Good luck go with you."

"That it certainly ought to do now, Jack, for this is, to tell the honest truth, rather a different sort of adventure to those that generally engage our attention. For the love of everything now, mind, whatever you do, that you don't follow Phillip too closely."

"Trust me."

Dick at once started over the way, and in a careless manner, for fear Phillip should be looking from the window of the cottage, he stalked up the lane. It is highly probable, however, that he might have gone in any way he liked, for Phillip was by far too busy with his own disguise, to pay the remotest attention just then to anything else.

We will in the forthcoming adventure watch the conduct and proceedings of Phillip, leaving our friends to act as their good feeling and judgment, may direct them in the defence of the beautiful young girl who was in such danger.

Phillip then quite satisfied himself, before he went into the cottage, that nobody saw him, so that when he did get in, he thought he had nothing in the world to do but to put on the disguise with which he was in the habit of going up the lane; but upon this occasion, having a horrible guilty knowledge of what he meant to do, he shook to that degree, that it was with the greatest possible difficulty he could put on the apparel which was to make such a transformation in his appearance.

In about double the time, however, that he usually took to make the

change, he did at length effect it, and then placing the drugged bottle of wine in a small hand-basket, he, with that upon his arm, left the cottage.

Now he did not look to the right or to the left, for he felt confident in his disguise, and he really believed that the only person he had to deal with was Grace herself. He went across the road quickly and up the lane as fast as it was at all prudent to go, considering that he personated an old woman, and perhaps a little faster.

The inhabitants of a few of the cottages at the commencement of the lane, had got to know him through seeing him several times, and one said, as he went along—

“Well, old Goody, how are you to-day?”

“Poorly, poorly,” replied Phillip, in a very well acted voice indeed, as he went on.

He then pursued his way until he came to the palings of the garden of the large house that was to let, and then he slackened his pace and only crept along. He pretended to be gathering something in the hedge, but in reality he was carefully looking about him to see if any one were at hand. After getting in this way a handful of chickweed, he quickened his pace a little, still skirting the palings.

It was well that Dick was capitally hidden, and it was well that Jack was not too hasty in following Phillip, so as to come into sight before the rascal got housed; for if he had, without the smallest doubt, Phillip would have turned back, and postponed his visit to Grace for that day.

Everything, however, happened as it was wished to happen, and after a few minutes' more skulking along the palings, he suddenly whipped a little key out of his pocket, and opening a small door with it, disappeared in an instant.

“I am safe here,” he said, as he closed the little door, and locked it on the inside.

It was rather curious that at that moment Dick popped from behind a hay-stack in a meadow on the other side of the lane, and said—

“Now he's nabbed.”

The place where Phillip now found himself, was in truth a neglected garden. The trees had grown tall and strong, the shrubs had got wild and straggling, and the flowers had run in all directions, disdaining cultivated art, and rapidly lapsing into their original wild habits.

To him the place had no charms either of retrospection or anticipation. All he knew and felt was, that he had come there to commit a murder, and that each moment, although he felt his nerves fearfully shaken, he likewise felt more and more inclined to do the deed.

There was nothing whatever to interrupt him, and he made his way, regardless of the remains of the old pathway, towards the house, which, with its weather-stained walls and its closed windows, looked grim and desolate.

“There was a murder, they say, committed in this house once,” muttered Phillip Manning, as he reached its threshold; “and so no one will live in it. Now there will be two. Yes, now there will be two; for nothing can, and nothing shall, save Grace Manning from death to-day. She shall never be a witness against me. I always thought that even the highest crimes could be committed with perfect ease if people were but commonly careful. I shall do this deed and no one will be a bit the wiser. Indeed it is as good as done, and beneath that mulberry-tree I will bury the only mute witness of my crime. Yes, there shall the body of Grace lie and rot while I comfort her father's and my uncle's declining years, bidding him look upon me as a son, although he has lost his only daughter. Then of course grief will soon kill him, after he has made a will in my favour, leaving me all his property, which is truly immense, and I shall have my heart's desire—unbounded means of enjoyment. Oh, how I will play the tyrant and trample on all who come within my power.”

While he indulged in this day-dream, he was fumbling in his pockets for a key to open the door of the house with. He found it at last, and then he disappeared within the ill-omened structure that had earned so bad a name, and which he fully intended should from that day be entitled to a worse one.

He did not fasten the door behind him. What was the use? He was so very safe.

The hall in which he now was consisted of a large space, paved with alternate black and white marble squares, and from the centre of this hall sprang the principal staircase of the house. There were, however, numerous rooms opening from the hall itself, and into one of those he went. Phillip never appeared in his disguise before Grace. He always felt that that would be useless, as a tone—a look—a gesture might discover him, and probably would do so to one who knew him so well as she did. Into one of these rooms, then, leading off from the hall, he went, to get rid of his disguise. Wrapped up in the bottom of the basket he had brought with him from the cottage, was his coat, and that was the only article he found necessary to alter his present appearance with.

In that side room, which had been a pretty enough looking breakfast-room, he quickly effected the change in his apparel which he thought necessary, and then, with the drugged bottle of wine and some biscuits, he crept up the staircase. Concealed in his breast was a double-barrelled pistol loaded carefully.

"Should she refuse the wine," he muttered, "she shall die by a more violent means; but in all cases die she shall."

The whole of the upper part of the house was in darkness, for Phillip had taken great care to close all the shutters so that no ray of light should by any sort of accident reach the room in which poor Grace was kept a prisoner. That room was an inner one, with but a small window to it.

"Now," he said, as he began to make his way towards her, by unlocking the door that led to the little room in which she was, "now I have a part to play, and we shall see whether the compliments that have been paid to me on the score of my acting be genuine or not."

By the aid of a phosphorous match he got a light in the outer room. A half-burnt candle stood in a piece of wood, by way of a candlestick, on the floor. He ignited it; and then waiting a moment until it had burnt sufficiently to be beyond the danger of sudden extinction from being moved, he crept towards the door of the actual room in which Grace was a captive.

He unlocked it and flung it open. Then shading the light from his eyes with his hands, he called—

"Grace! Grace!"

There was no reply for the moment, and the idea that she had fled from the house came across him like a death-pang. He rushed into the room.

"Grace! Grace! Speak! Speak, I charge you. I pray you do not drive me mad by this silence! Oh, you are there!"

She stood at some few paces from him, calm and still.

"Well, Phillip Manning," she said, "what would you with me? I am here, as you see."

"Yes," he said, and he trembled violently. "I now see that you are here. But—why did you not speak to me at once? It is no matter though. It is no matter. Oh, Grace! Grace! Pity me!"

"I do pity you."

"You do pity me?"

"Yes. Guilty creatures surely may well be pitied. May they not, Phillip Manning?"

"Well, well, Grace—perhaps you are right. I have come to-day to you with very different feelings from what I had when I last saw you. Then all the evil passions of my soul were up in arms; but better thoughts have since come over me, Grace; and if a true and a sincere repentance for what I have done, and such atonement as I can make will—will—"

He affected that his feelings would not permit him to finish his speech; but placing the candle upon the chimney-piece he audibly sobbed.

"Is this change indeed sincere?" said Grace.

"You may well, indeed, doubt it," added Phillip, pretending to speak with great difficulty, and to gulp down his sobs as he did so. "You may well doubt it, Grace; but it is sincere; and you cannot see a more wretched man than I. Some demon surely must have possessed me to make me behave to you as I have behaved. I cannot myself understand it."

"If, indeed, Phillip," said Grace, "I could think that you had awakened to a proper sense of your wickedness, it would not cost me an effort to forgive you."

"Ah, can you be so good—so angelic?"

"You may prove to me your repentance by the commencement of your atonement. When you restore me to the arms of my father, I shall then, indeed, believe that you are sincere."

"I will do so. I have come now to do so. Without condition other than a claim upon your pity and your mercy, I have come now to take you from this place, and to restore you to your father. In some other land, as you yourself suggested to me when last we met, I shall hope to find that peace of mind which will now for ever be denied to me in my own. You, Grace, will be my intercessor with your father; and while I feel that it will be impossible to say one word in extenuation actually of my offence, still my bitter and heart-felt repentance may be pleaded."

"And it will not be pleaded in vain."

"Ah, think you so? What happy words!"

"I am certain of it. But do not delay, Phillip. Take me home at once, and for yourself fear nothing. I will make it the first of my requests to my father to forgive you, and to make some sort of provision for you out of England. Let us go now at once, I implore you. Every moment that I remain here is another moment of misery to me, and of deep anxiety to my father."

"Ah!" said Phillip, wiping his eyes, "how well I can understand this anxiety. Come, you shall take a biscuit and one glass of wine to strengthen you, my much injured cousin, and then we will be off."

"No, no; I want nothing."

"Yes, you do: I feel certain that after even the few days only that you have passed here you must be weak and ill. You will find that when you get out into the fresh open air you will be ready to faint away. But one biscuit, soaked in a drop of wine, will restore you, and keep up your strength and courage."

"I have no need of courage now, Phillip, that you have repented; and of strength I feel I have enough."

"Nay, but——"

"Excuse me, Phillip; I will not drink; I have a great objection to wine—I do not like it. Do not ask me."

"To oblige me, Grace. Only one sip—just a sip will be sufficient. You will not, surely, make a quarrel between us at such a moment as this, and for such a trifle as the taking or the refusing a glass of wine? Surely you would not run the risk of throwing me back again into my former frame of mind regarding you for such a trifle?"

"Your repentance, Phillip, must be but skin-deep, indeed, if it can vanish because I refuse a glass of wine."

"Well, well, that is an uncommonly true remark. But yet you will take the wine?"

"No, Phillip."

"Curses on you! You shall take it!"

"Ah, Phillip now I know you again!"

"Know me again? What do you mean?"

"I mean that from the first I knew that your pretended grief and repent-

ance only served as a cloak to hide some object. Why, you cannot even deceive a poor simple girl like myself. Your grand object to-day is to get me to drink that wine, and I will not take one drop of it. No, Phillip, I tell you, no; I will not taste it."

"Wretched girl! Have you twenty lives, that you feel you can afford to trifle with them in this way? If I be not a repentant man, you shall, in good truth, find that I am a desperate one. The question between us is your life or mine; and I tell you now, Grace, that, with all your youth and all your beauty, your last hour has now come!"

"If it be the will of Heaven, it has."

"It is my will—that is now sufficient."

She burst into tears.

"Oh, Phillip," she said, "you cannot be so very wicked as to take away life. If even now there are times when you feel as though you would give anything for innocence of mind and purpose, what will be your feelings when you have done murder? Ordinary crimes may, in some measure be atoned for; but who shall restore the dead? Who shall bid the grave give up its tenant, because the murderer is repentant? Pause, Phillip, for your own sake, pause, before you commit an act that is, in its awful consequences, irrevocable. Spare my life—oh, spare me, Phillip!"

"No; curses on you! You have yourself goaded me to this act, and you shall die."

"No, no—oh, God!—no."

"I say yes. There is no help for you. You are shut out from all the world. If you and I were upon some desolate island in the midst of the great sea, we could not possibly be more isolated than we are from all human nature. You may cry, pray, rave, and shriek, but there is no help for you. You are my victim—it is a settled thing. You have rejected the terms upon which I offered you your life and freedom, and I will kill you. You have your choice—poison or a bullet?"

He took the pistol from his breast-pocket as he spoke. The young girl clasped her hands before her face, and sank upon her knees in a paroxysm of terror.

"Spare me!—spare me!"

"Will you drink the wine?"

"I cannot. I dare not."

"Then there is but one other alternative—you will die a more violent death; but die you must, and shall. I say that there is but one other alternative—"

"Liar! and murderer," exclaimed Dick, who on finding the door unlocked, had noiselessly entered, just in time to wrench the upraised weapon from Phillip's grasp.

With the desperate energy of a madman did the defeated miscreant struggle to regain possession of the weapon, and might probably have succeeded, from the fact of Grace's clinging to the arm of Turpin, begging for protection, thus impeding his movements. But at this moment Jack arrived to put an end to the desperate encounter, which he speedily did by dealing Phillip a blow with his clenched fist, which knocked him senseless to the earth.

Grace in her terror at what she conceived to be only some new misfortune, was on the point of fainting with fear, but hearing Jack's voice in congratulation at her escape—immediately recollected that he was the companion of him who had delivered her from Phillip's treacherous abduction. Throwing herself at his feet, the innocent and unhappy girl begged in the most imploring language that he would restore her to her father and her home.

The sight of so much beauty in such distress was enough to unman the stern matrons of even Turpin and our friend Jack, who did all they could to console and assure the weeping Grace, in which they finally succeeded.

Our two friends now consulted what was the best plan to adopt in order

to convey Grace to her father, and at the same time secure the body of the remorseless wretch, who still lay on the floor where Jack's vigorous arm had stretched him. It was finally decided that Jack should procure a carriage at Islington, and at once escort Grace to her father's house, and inform him where and in what state Phillip was to be found, leaving him to adopt such a course in reference to his nephew as he should think best.

In the meanwhile Turpin was to remain and keep guard over the defeated villain for fear he might revive ere the judge could be notified of his whereabouts or take measures for his punishment.

This plan was successfully carried out, Grace arriving at home at the very moment that her father had learned that the prisoner, John Smith, had been recognized and denounced as the notorious Duval, through the agency of Tom Brereton, who was then confined in Newgate for perjury, and who had caught a glimpse of Claude as the latter was taking a little exercise in the prison yard, and for which information he had put in his claim for the reward.

The judge was perfectly beside himself with joy when his resented child fell weeping in his arms, to which she had been conveyed by Jack, who having told his story to the judge, and received his thanks, was speedily on his way back to Turpin, accompanied by some of the servants to secure Phillip, whom they were directed to convey forthwith to Newgate, an order to that effect having been made out by the indignant father.

As soon as the father and the daughter had somewhat recovered their composure, and could talk of the various incidents of the last few days, Grace began to speak in the most glowing terms of the conduct of Claude.

The delighted father having listened awhile in silence at last said :—

“Grace, my love, I want particularly to know every word that this Mr. Smith said to you, and I want a very minute detail of his actions towards you.

Upon this, Grace related all to her father, and the whole narrative said so much for the courage, and the chivalrous honour and delicacy of Claude, that the old judge was compelled to rise and pace the room to and fro to recover his equanimity, and at last pausing before Grace, he said—

“And this man—and this man, Grace, who rescued you from Phillip in the green lane—this man who with the utmost delicacy brought you to town—this man, who protected you all the way, and who only left you at the door for a moment, because he would spare my feelings too sudden a shock from the joy of your recovery—this man, my dear, did all this at the risk of dying on a scaffold, for he is no other than Claude Duval the celebrated highwayman; and now stands committed to Newgate, from whence he will only step forth to death, and a terrible death, at the hands of the hangman!”

Grace uttered a cry of despair, and sank nearly fainting on the floor.

“No! no!” cried the judge, “rise my child. Comfort yourself. It must not be, it shall not be! He who has done so much for you, shall not suffer death in such a shape. It is our duty to save him.”

“But, dear father, there is one favour I want you to grant me now, and that is, that you escort me to my saviour's cell, that we may there thank him for all his generosity. It is the least return we can make for his kindness.”

The judge reflected for a few moments, and at last having consented, the carriage was ordered, and in a very short time the cell of Claude was enlivened by the presence of the grateful girl who could not be restrained from throwing herself upon the bosom of her deliverer, and there pouring out a torrent of gratitude, while her father and the case-hardened turnkey, were mute spectators of the touching scene.—(See engraving.)

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THAT night at ten o'clock, when all the cells were closed and the most active business of the day was over, the old larder in Newgate was worth looking at.

This larder was a place of some extent. The unhappy wretches who are to expiate their crimes upon the scaffold, are brought through it on that, to them, fearful morning, when they find no sympathy within Newgate, and when they know that there is a glaring crowd without waiting to see them die. But upon these occasions they do not absolutely see the larder.

No, a portable partition, for the reception of which there are grooves in the ceiling and on the floor, converts their progress, instead of being through a room, into one through a narrow passage, and then they step out to die, without having taken a last look, in their immediate progress, of pots and kettles, and coffee stew-pans, and all the etceteras of a large kitchen. But upon this present occasion the larder is in all its integrity and beauty. A rousing fire is in the ample grate, and some most appetizing steams fill the ambient air. You would not suppose yourself in Newgate at all were you there, which proves satisfactorily, that one kitchen is very like to another.

We must here state that this supper in the larder was contrary to rule, and that it would not by any means have been ventured upon, if the governor had not been known to be confined to his bed, or all but that; so that he could not pounce upon them at unawares; and as regarded each other, and the minor officials, they had too good an understanding among them to fear any treachery at all.

By a quarter past ten, then, they were assembled—only five of them; but then that five consisted of men who, if they pleased, could do something in Newgate, and from their looks it was pretty clear that something they meant to do. The cook was accustomed to these little gatherings in his domain; and as they always resulted in providing him with an unlimited amount of strong drink, he never made any kind of objection to them, but bustled about, and took good care that the solid portion of the entertainment should be none of the meanest the prison stores could afford.

Now, this cook had a failing, which was decidedly to take what folks call the other glass, which is generally considered to be the glass which is over and above that one at which a man may still preserve the equilibrium of both mind and body. Upon this occasion it was the special object of the officers and turnkeys to give him that other glass as speedily as possible, for they had matters of deep moment to consider of which it would not be wise to trust to cooks.

"Come, Bill," said Morgan, as he pushed a dish of exquisitely stewed oysters towards his friend, "you don't eat, man."

"Don't I?" replied Bill. "It's Jukes who takes nothing; and as for our good friend here, the cook, he is the most abstemious man in the world, and won't drink."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the cook, as he pushed his white night-cap up upon his brow, "don't I drink? Come, Mr. Morgan, pass the bottle, and I'll drink to your very good healths, all of you. Here's lots o'luck, and may business never fail. Ropes will be cheap when all the world grows honest, I think."

"When all the world grows honest, they won't want cooks," said Bill. "But you don't eat anything."

"Why, as to eating," said the cook, "I can't say I do in a regular way eat much. I now and then take a taste of one thing, and a taste of another; but what with the fire, and the smother, and one thing and another, I don't give way to eating."

"And the bottle?" said Jukes.

"No—no, Mr. Jukes. There you do me an injustice. I take a little, only

a little, to keep me a going, that's all, gentlemen; so here's good luck again; and all I can say is, that you are as welcome to a quiet little feed in the larder as can be. You have only to tell me before-hand that you are coming, and it will be all right. So here's to all again, and—and I only wish you all luck—l—luck, I—do. This is not bad brandy, wherever it came from. Hurrah for the road. That's a Highwayman's chaunt ain't it, Mr.—Mr.—Ju—Ju—Jukes?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"I—I thought so, and as I was saying, here's better luck still. God bless you all—all the lot of you. I'm a poor fellow in my way, but I know I—I—know—yes, that's it, I know. It's enough to make anybody cry it is. I—I—God bless you all."

"That will do," said Morgan, as the cook suddenly, losing his equilibrium, fell into a corner. "That will do. And now friends and mates lets to business."

"Ay, ay—to business," said the others.

"What do we live by?"

"Why, by grabbing the gentry and the cracksmen, to be sure. By the *family*, take 'em all in all, we live," said Bill, "and that's a fact. Now the idea of a parcel of rascals, out o' the profession, grabbing of a cove is 'promiscuous'—it is. They might as well grab us. I tell you what it is, mates—Claude Duval must get on the road again."

The others nodded.

"He's the chap for us. He belongs to us," said Morgan. "It's a robbery for anybody to meddle with him but us, and they shan't. The profuse rewards belong to the profession. I'm not a chap to say, let me have everything, but I don't like to see things go out of the profession. Are we agreed, comrades—are we agreed?"

"We are—we are."

"That's all right. Suppose Claude Duval escapes from Newgate? It will be no more than other folks have done before him; and if we choose to wink at things, why off he is. He's just the sort of a chap to make the try at it."

"He is."

"And if he can be given ever so slight a hint that on some particular night we shall all be remarkably blind and deaf, don't you think he'd be likely to take advantage of it?"

"To be sure he would. Why not?" If ever there was a man in Newgate likely to get out his own way, it's Claude Duval; and if we choose to say yes to it, it's as good as done. How is it to be managed? that's all we have got to consider now. Who is to let him know? for, after all, it must be only a broad hint."

"That's all. But Duval is no fool. I will see him when I am on duty to-morrow, and I'll be bound he will quite well enough understand then which way the cat jumps. Only, of course, he mustn't get out by the regular way."

"Confound it all!" said Bill, "we are making a trouble about nothing at all. Trust him, I say, and take him clear out, and give him a fair start. It can easily be done through the chapel, and over the wall, by the corner of Newgate street, if he has anybody to help him. I know it can't be done otherwise; but I will see him off the first regularly dark night, if you like."

"But what can you say to him?"

"Say to him? Why, the exact truth. If we don't, Claude Duval is the man to guess at it; and it is always better to tell a fellow what you really mean, than leave him to find out, and know it when you have said something else to him."

The others seemed to think this rather a bold proceeding on the part of Bill; but the more they considered of it, the more they felt induced to come into it; and at last it was fully and completely agreed that upon the first occasion when it could be done, Duval was to be offered his freedom from

Newgate upon the express ground that he had been taken by one who was not in the profession; an argument which, knowing the amount of rewards offered for him, he would be able fully to appreciate.

How far this might have the effect of interfering with Tom Brereton and his claims to the reward they did not stop to inquire. It was for them sufficient that Claude should once again be in "the market."

By the light of the lantern that swung above their heads they saw that their friend, the cook, was still in the land of dreams; and then having made a very tolerable clearance of the supper, they left the larder to the cook and to repose.

If the reader will now please to reflect for a moment or two, he will not fail to perceive in how singular a situation Claude is placed, and how strangely that situation contrasts with his position but a short time previously.

Here was the man who had been hunted almost to death—who had not been permitted to leave for ever the scene of his crimes, and lead a different life in another land—who had been interrupted in every way—whose life it had been a darling object to extinguish—a man who had been pursued by fire, and secured at last in the very grasp of the authorities—enclosed within stone walls, and yet how many now were plotting and planning his rescue!

But it all only goes to prove what Claude had himself, upon more than one occasion, asserted, namely—that he was simply and only pursued for the price that was set upon his life. It became a matter of business to hunt him down. It was now equally a matter of business to let him go.

Of course Judge Manning, who was as truly anxious as any one could possibly be for the release of Claude, felt and acted from pure motives of deep, heartfelt gratitude towards him. He had, perhaps, promised his child more than his cooler judgment could tell him there was a possibility of performing, when he said that Claude should be freed; but if that promise be qualified by saying that he would do all that he possibly could to bring about such a result, there is no doubt but he will keep it, both in the spirit and to the letter.

But the struggle in the mind of the judge between his sense of public duty was long and severe. The feelings of the man and the father, however, triumphed over those of the judge, and he said to himself—

"I will, if it be in my power so to do, rescue him who was the champion of my child, and then it will be fit that I retire from the performance of those public duties which my private feelings have stepped in to nullify."

After once coming to such a conclusion as this, it may be very well guessed that the judge would not allow any circumstance to prevent him from doing his very utmost in the case; and accordingly, within one hour after the conversation with his daughter, which we have recorded, we find him closetted with a small, prim-looking man, dressed in most plain black, and with such a quiet manner about him, that one would have supposed him quite incapable of anything in the shape of either mental or bodily resistance to anything.

This individual was the private solicitor of Judge Manning, and one upon whom he knew he could thoroughly depend. The subject upon which he had summoned him will be quickly apparent, although to judge from the faint look of surprise upon the attorney's face, one would fancy it was something much more out of the common way than it really was.

"And, my lord," said the attorney, "you really mean that you will do anything to rescue this man?"

"I do mean it, Mr. Sago. I do mean it; and I sent for you to entrust you with the affair. Mind, I do not mean to be so absurd as to say that I will force this business on you. Far from it. If you have any disinclination to it, say so candidly and at once, and I will seek some other less scrupulous practitioner."

"My lord—my lord," said Mr. Sago, placing his hand upon that part of his waistcoat, beneath which he presumed his heart was situated, "it is quite impossible you could find a less scrupulous attorney than myself. I am strictly and entirely professional."

Just the faint ghost of a smile crossed the face of the judge as he heard these words from the lips of the attorney—words which he so well knew how to interpret; and then, after the pause of a few moments, he said to him—

“We perfectly understand each other, then, Mr. Sago, upon this case. You will do your very best in it, and you will charge me with the expenses, together with £500, for your own professional services.”

The attorney bowed, made some unimportant remark about the weather; and then, without once again recurring to the subject, he took his leave of Judge Manning.

When he was alone, the judge leant his head upon his hands for a few moments, and then said, in a desponding tone of voice—

“I have done all that I can do, and more than I ought to have dared to do. I may be successful, and yet much do I doubt it. Time—time alone will show. I will now tell Grace that I have set this matter in motion.”

It was strange that at the very same time that the judge was in consultation with his solicitor, concerning the saving Claude Duval in any way, both Dick and Jack who had just learned the appalling news, and had hurried to their friend the Quaker, were in deep and solemn converse with him upon the same subject, and the turnkeys and officers of Newgate had as good as agreed that the highwayman was to be free in a short time.

Franklin had, with amazing tact, found out all that there was to know about Claude's present position. He could tell the two friends that he in whom they were so deeply interested, was committed to the prison of Newgate for safe keeping, until the authorities had fully decided upon what was the course they should think proper to pursue towards him. He could further tell them that Claude was in a strong cell, but that he was not ironed, although, no doubt, he would be, and that he would be carefully watched. He could not, however, with all his cleverness, and all his means of information, tell them that there was actually a conspiracy within the very walls of Newgate to set him (Claude) free.

“We then,” said Jack, “are utterly hopeless; for alas! what can we do in the matter?”

“Little enough,” said Dick. “All we can hope to do is to convey to Duval some tools which may help him to make an escape from Newgate, or to attempt to do so.”

“We will easily enough let him have tools,” said Franklin. “I will hand them to him when I see him in his cell.”

“When you see him?”

“Yes. There is no difficulty in that. I will show you how I can procure an interview with him, if you will be guided by me.”

“You rather astonish me,” said Dick.

“And me likewise,” said Jack.

“Oh, pho!” said the quaker; “nothing can be easier than that. You know that the only person from without who is allowed to visit a prisoner in Newgate, without hinderance, or being well searched at the lobby, is the solicitor whom he may pitch upon to conduct his case, and who must produce a written retainer from him.”

“Yes—yes.”

“Well, then, you, Jack, or you, Dick—it don't matter which—must write to Duval in Newgate, urging him to send a written retainer to a Mr. Alfred Jones, addressed to this house. With that in my hand and properly made up, I will present myself at the gate of Newgate, and I have no sort of doubt but that I shall at once get an interview with Claude, and of course I can then carry him in anything I please.”

“But will they, if I write,” said Jack, “deliver to him my letter?”

“They must, as it will contain nothing but what is perfectly unexceptionable in every way.”

“Then let it be done at once,” said Dick, “and you, Jack, can write it more perfectly than I, as you are by far the oldest friend of Claude; and when you go to him, Mr. Franklin, you can tell him all the news, and how

gladly we would do anything in the world that he can think of to procure his freedom."

"Truly, friend, I will," said Franklin.

The letter was speedily written by Jack, and although it contained not one word that could be construed by the prison authorities into anything that it would be improper or imprudent to communicate to the prisoner, yet, from the style of it, Claude would have no difficulty in seeing that Jack wished him to send the written authority to Mr. Alfred Jones, for a very special reason.

The address, too, to the quaker's house, which would be sure to strike him, would of itself be sufficient to assure him that the missive came direct from his friends, and meant more than met the eye.

In two hours the answer came back. It merely contained a few lines to Jack, and kind remembrances to all friends, and the order of retainer to Mr. Alfred Jones, solicitor.

"Now, my friends," said Franklin, "you may wait here while I pay a visit to Newgate, and tell me before I get ready what out of all this box of tools and implements you think will be most useful to Claude Duval."

As the quaker spoke, he dragged from under a table a small chest, which, upon being opened, disclosed a beautiful collection of house-breaker's tools of all kinds and descriptions, most of them being of the most exquisite workmanship and the most ingenious design.

Dick and Jack made some selections, and handed them to the quaker, Dick saying—"There, if you can manage to give him only these five tools he will not be kept in Newgate by the power of locks, or hinges, or fetters I'll be bound."

"He shall have them, friend. He shall have them. I do not in the smallest degree anticipate any difficulty, for the name of Alfred Jones, as a solicitor, appeareth in the law list, and it is most unlikely that they should know that individual at the gate of Newgate; but as in all human enterprises, friend Jack, there is some little chance of failure, I will risk that much."

With this the quaker went off to Newgate capitially dressed in black, and looking so cool, and so collected, that no one for a moment could possibly have suspected him of any ulterior designs, or of being anything but what he represented himself. With that easy confident air, which a man has who goes upon an errand that he knows and feels he is all right regarding, Franklin ascended the steps of Newgate and rapped smartly at the half-door.

"Well, what now?" said the man who was on the lock, as it is technically termed.

"Open the wicket," said Franklin, with an air of authority, "I am a solicitor. Open the wicket."

The turnkey mechanically obeyed, and when he was in the lobby, Franklin took out a large pocket-book, and after a pretended search among its multifarious papers, that nearly exhausted the patience of the turnkey, he affected at last, to find the written authority from Claude, constituting Mr Alfred Jones his solicitor.

"Oh, here it is, at last," he said. "Be so good as to get some one to show me to Duval quickly, for my time is of importance."

"Oh. This here ought to go to the governor," said the turnkey.

"Well, be quick about it,"

"Yet, I daresay it's all right. Joe, look at this. You are more of a scollard than I is. Is this a proper *torney's thorty*?"

Joe looked at the paper as wisely as possible, and then in a very oracular kind of manner, declared his opinion that it was as right as ninepence, and that he'd better show the gemman the way.

"That's the thing, my good fellow," said Franklin, "and if ever I am in here for anything, I'll be as liberal among you all as a prince."

"Ah," said Joe, "catch you lawyers a-coming here, 'cept on a visit only, that's all. You knows how to manage things, you does. This way sir, this

way. We hasn't no manner of objection to drink your health, though, for all that."

"I always do things regular," said Franklin. "Wait till my client has paid me something, and without it I don't come again, I can tell you, and then I'll stand a crown."

"Ah," said Joe, with a look of admiration, "I never seed you here afore, sir, but you is one of the deep ones, I can see that any way. This here's the way, sir. Hilloa, Foxey. Here's a lawyer come to see Duval. Just show him in."

Foxey, who was enjoying a quiet snooze in a little watch-box sort of place, jammed up into a corner of a narrow passage leading to the range of cells in one of which Claude was confined, awakened, and growled out—

"What is you arter now? Can't a man shut his eyes for a matter of a minute, but you come with your larks and botherations? Be off."

"Not till I have seen my client, Mr. Foxey," said Franklin. "Then I shall be off as quickly as I can, but not before."

"Eh? oh, eh? I begs your parding sir. I thought as it was only a bit of Joe's gammon, that's all; 'cos, you see, sir, he often pokes fun at me, pretending as I'm give to going to sleep, when all the while there ain't a wider awake fellow than me in the whole stone pitcher."

Foxey led the way to Claude's cell, and opening the door, he said—

"A wisiter," and then he banged it to again upon the quaker, who stood a few paces within its threshold. His first act was to place his ear against the massive door at which the officer had departed, to be sure that he was gone, and then being quite clear upon that head, he turned to Claude, saying—

"You know me, friend?"

"Ah," said Claude springing up, "Mr. Franklin?"

"The same. Dick and Jack are at my house. I find I have been misinformed regarding your condition."

"Misinformed? As how?"

"You are in fetters, and I was told such was not the case."

"They only put them on a quarter of an hour ago, because they found me examining the stanchions of the window, and they have a perfect horror of my escaping."

"And yet it may done."

"Of course it may. What has been done may be always done again, and many things that never were done at all will be done in the fulness of time. But tell me—how is Jack, and how is Dick, and what has become of Phillip Manning? Grace is, of course, in perfect safety with her father?"

"Jack is well," said the quaker, answering all the questions of Claude in the most methodical manner; "and Dick is well. Phillip Manning is in this building, and Grace is happy with her father."

"Thank God."

"Your own situation is now of the greatest importance. Do you despair, or do you hope, Claude Duval?"

"Despair? Who that knows anything of me ever found food for the opinion that I should despair? Who that ever heard of Claude Duval, accused him of abandoning hope even under the most cheerless circumstances? Do not, Mr. Franklin, ask me such a question. Something seems to whisper to me that my time has not yet come."

"I do not think it has."

"I thank you for that thought. No, I shall, I think, sniff the night air again, and breathe the soft odour of fruits and flowers; I do not think that I shall only pass from this cell to death."

"Nor do I. I have promised Jack and Dick that all that man can do to save you, I will do, and I will keep my word. Here is a plan of Newgate, accurately laid down, for your information; and here are such tools and implements as no doubt you know well how to use."



Claude's Escape from Newgate—The Attempted Seizure.

"Let me see them."

Claude ran over with an eager eye the five exquisitely made tools that the quaker had brought him, and then with a deep sigh, he said—

"Yes, these will do much, but there is yet something wanting."

"What is that?"

"Rope. I can do nothing without a good coil of rope. If I had that I do think that, favoured a little by fortune and a dark night. I could really now bid adieu to Newgate."

"You really think so?"

"From my heart I do."

"Tis well, friend," said Franklin, suddenly, as at times only it was his humour to do, adopting the quaker phraseology, "'Tis well, friend Claude; here is the rope thou seekest."

As he spoke, he unbuttoned his top-coat and exhibited, nicely wound round his waist, a complete coil of rope, of evidently many yards in length.

"Thee will find, friend Claude," he said, "that this is a bit of good stuff, and will not fail thee. Double ay, treble thy weight and mine together, might hang to it without fear, slender as it looks; and now what dost thou think of thy chances?"

"Think? Why I think I can almost say, that I know I shall get out of

Newgate. Have you any small grapples or hooks to give me to fasten to the end of the rope?"

"Yes, friend Claude, I have not forgotten those; and it striketh me that thou art as well provided as any man can well be, friend Claude. What thinkest thou?"

"I think, that I shall owe my life to you, and that the time will come when you will not look back with any regret upon having done me this favour."

"Then, friend Claude, I will bid thee good day, and remember I am Mr. Jones thy solicitor; and if thou shouldst want to see me again, pray send to me in that name at the address in Dean-street, which thou knowest. And now, dost thou want money? for if thou dost, thou hast only to name the sum, and it is now at thy disposal."

"No," said Claude. "I think I will try this escape quite unaided by any one in the prison. If a trial to bribe a man fails, one's situation is only much worse, for he gains information, and that begets increased caution, and perhaps they might find somewhere to place me which would preclude the possibility of getting away at all."

"Thou art right. I wish thee all manner of luck, friend, and wish thee good day."

The quaker tapped at the door, which had been locked upon him; and as the sound reverberated through the passage that communicated with the cells, the turnkey heard it, and came up with his huge bunch of keys.

"Your client, Mr. Lawyer," he said, as he preceded Franklin along the passages to the lobby; "your client is booked, I take it."

"Very probably," said Franklin.

"Ha! ha! He will dance upon nothing."

"Yes, friend, I do not think that either you or he need fear drowning, even under any circumstances."

"Me? What do you mean? Why should I be hanged?"

"That, friend, is best known to yourself; but I have had such immense professional experience, that I am enabled to say at a glance whether a man is bound for the gallows or not."

"But—but you don't mean to say that I look like it?"

"No, friend, not like it, but itself. I don't entertain the smallest doubt upon the subject."

"The devil!"

"Yes, the devil is thy ultimate destination, but comfort yourself, it may be a year or two yet."

"A year or two? What a comfortable idea, to be sure! Confound you, I wish you would keep your mighty cleverness to yourself. Who asked you to be so wonderfully prophetic?"

By this time they had reached the lobby, and Franklin then saw a small thin man who was conversing with one of the officials, to whom the quaker heard him say—

"You will perceive that this is an order from Judge Manning to permit me to see the prisoner Claude Duval. Pray satisfy yourself that it is all regular."

"Oh, I dare say it's all right enough," said the turnkey. "Here, Foxey, you have been once to the cell; just show this gentleman Claude Duval's lodgings, if you please."

"Humph!" said Franklin, as he passed out of Newgate. "That, then, is a messenger from the judge. What does he want, I wonder?"

Claude was rather surprised at Mr. Sago's appearance, and he looked all the surprise he felt. The manner of the cautious attorney was certainly not in any way calculated to decrease that surprise. The first thing he did upon getting into the cell was to place himself in a crouching attitude, and to listen attentively to the retreating footsteps of the turnkey. He even went the length of counting them upon his fingers as the man slowly trampled down the narrow stone corridor into which the cells opened. Then he went all

round the walls, examining them up and down with the greatest attention.

"Pray, sir," said Claude, for the attorney had not spoken one word to him, "pray, sir, is it usual to send lunatics into the cells of Newgate, to annoy prisoners?"

"Hush!" cried Mr. Sago. "I really do think that it is all right and safe, I do, indeed."

"What is all right and safe? What do you mean?"

"Why, sir, I mean that I think there are no ear-trumpets, or peep-holes, from this cell."

"Ear-trumpets and peep-holes! Are there such things in Newgate!"

"Bless your innocence, yes. Lots of 'em; but, I say, I don't think that there are any such here, so we may speak freely, although in a low voice—mind you, in quite a low voice. We cannot be too cautious in these sort of communications, and when I have anything very particular to make you acquainted with, I will use this."

As he spoke, the attorney took a little slate from his pocket, and a pencil, and then he sat himself down opposite to Claude, and rubbed his hands together like a man thoroughly satisfied with himself, and with what he was about.

"If," said Claude, "it is all the same to you, sir, I should be glad of some little hint as to what you mean by all this."

"My dear sir, you shall have not only a hint, but the fullest and most complete information. Do you know——?" Here he wrote the name of Judge Manning upon the slate, which Claude replied to with a nod. "I come from him, my dear sir, as far as an order to see you goes, and he wishes me to tell you that situated as he is, he don't see how he can do you any good."

"Nor I neither," said Claude. "Pray give my best respects to him, and say that I feel I ought not, and cannot, expect anything from him in the way of aid, situated as he is with regard to his public office."

"Good, my dear friend; but I—I—" Here Mr. Sago put his finger by the side of his nose. "I have an idea."

"You don't say so?" said Claude. "Pray, what is it, sir? I shall be much obliged by your letting me know it as quickly as possible, so that I may have the pleasure of bidding you good day, as I prefer being alone."

"Good. Of the two I am a man who generally prefers being alone; but my idea is, that for a consideration I could put you in a way of bidding good-bye to Newgate, and you will recollect that in so doing, you include the gallows in the tender adieu."

"True," said Claude.

"Well, sir, about the consideration. Can you manage the insignificant sum of five hundred?"

"It gives me great pleasure," said Claude, "to hear that five hundred is to you an insignificant sum; and if you will tell me in what way you propose assisting me to escape, I will give you an answer."

"I shall open the front door for you, my dear sir, and let you walk out at your ease."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. That is the way I will manage it. I will find some one, for a consideration, who will come here and let you go out in his clothes. For a consideration I will so blind the eyes of the turnkeys with gold dust, that they will suspect nothing until you are off and away upon the road again; but it will, to pay everybody, take about five hundred."

"I will think of it," said Claude.

"Very good. My name is Sago. I will call upon you to-morrow at this hour, and then you can give me a definitive answer upon the subject. Remember, if you cannot find the money at once, I will advance it, until, from the profits of your business, you can conveniently repay me; for I really do

think that to hang a man for doing a little business on the highway, is nothing better than murder. You will easily comprehend that my feelings alone have prompted me in this affair. I do not, of course, expect to get for myself one penny piece of the money. But no matter: while I have the approval of what is here—"Mr. Sago gave his chest a thump—"I shall be satisfied."

"You are quite a remarkable man," said Claude. "Be assured that I shall be in a situation to give you an answer to-morrow at this hour, if you can get at me."

"Humph! I will try that. My dear sir, I wish you a very good day, indeed. Keep up your spirits, and hope for the best, my dear sir. I have been keeping an eye upon the walls of this cell, and I really do believe it is a genuine one, and that there are no ear-trumpets or peep holes about it."

With this Mr. Sago left the cell, rather congratulating himself upon the idea that with what he would get from Judge Manning, and what he would get from Claude, he should be able to make a pretty good job of the escape from Newgate, always provided the officers were not such miracles of virtue as to resist bribery. When he reached the lobby again, he took from his pocket rather an elegant snuff-box, and handed it to the man on duty at the wicket gate, for him to take a pinch from, at the same time saying—

"I think there are seven of you altogether, on and off duty, about the lobby here, and the stone passage leading to Duval's cell?"

"Exactly seven," said the man, "and werry good snuff this is, sir."

"Seven," added Sago. "Humph! seven times twenty makes one hundred and forty, which, in guineas, has a nice bright look. I am now going to the Ram's Horn and Cartridge Box, opposite, to take a quiet glass. I shall be there for half an hour; and if you and the others have a fancy that twenty guineas apiece will be pretty for merely dozing a little, and running any risks, why one of you can come over, and say as much to me there. Ask for Mr. Sago."

The turnkey, with a grin, as he opened the wicket to let the attorney go, said—"It's about Duval?"

Mr. Sago nodded.

The turnkey nodded; and then they both winked; and Mr. Sago, as he walked over the way, said to himself—

"It's a done job, and very cheap, too; very cheap, indeed. Well I rather think I shall make a good thing of this; and everybody will be so much interested in keeping the affair snug, that the judge will never be a bit the wiser. Sago—Sago, you are a genius, that you are; and you always were, from the first day that you began life by sweeping out the office of Shark & Co., in Gray's Inn; and studied law by listening at the key-holes to their private consultations."

We need not follow the officers—two of whom went within the ensuing half hour to the public house—in their bargaining with Mr. Sago. Nothing pleased them better than to find that some one was willing to pay them for what they had made up their minds to do for nothing, namely—to set Claude Duval at liberty.

With their motives for so doing gratuitously, the reader is already acquainted; so that, what with one thing and another, Claude found himself thoroughly surrounded by persons not at all anxious to keep him in Newgate; but plotting and planning in every shape and way for the best means of getting him comfortably and quickly out of it. The only thing the officers made as a special bargain with Mr. Sago was, that they were to have the twenty pounds apiece, provided Duval got clear away, let it be done how it might. They had their own reasons for preferring a different mode to that which Mr. Sago proposed. They much preferred a regular prison-breaking to the substitution of another person for Claude in his cell, in whose power they might all be to an inconvenient extent.

It was the gentleman named Bill, who, about two hours after the visit of

Mr. Sago, made his way into Claude's cell, and gave him a hint of what he might, if he chose, set about; and as Mr. Bill's mind and perceptions were not of the most delicate or highly cultivated order, the hint was a pretty broad one.

"I tells you what it is, Duval," he said; "you haven't been nabbed in the riglar way, and fair play is a jewel whether in or out of Newgate; so, you see, if so be as you thinks as there is a chance of giving the old stone jug the go-by, don't say that me or any of my mates stood in your way, nor don't say that any of us stood out of it either, that's all I have got to say to you."

"I understand," said Duval.

"Very good. A nod is as good as a vink to a blind oss. In course, you'll want tools. Well, perhaps this here bag will be left here by me quite promiscuous. Perhaps you will want to know the way; well, it's through the chapel, which is at the end of this here passage, then into the yard, and over the wall by the corner of Newgate street. But, perhaps you will say, how are you to get on the wall and down on t'other side? Well, perhaps you'll find a rope a-hanging, and when you climbs up by it, you can pull it up and let it down on the other side. But don't be fancying that I am telling you how to get out of Newgate."

"Oh dear, no," said Claude. "That would be very absurd. You may depend upon it I shall not take anything so ridiculous into my head as a consequence of your visit."

"And you never will, so help you, let out a word about it?"

"Upon my life I will not. There's not a man living who can say Claude Duval ever broke his word or paltered with it in any shape or way."

"I believes it," said Bill giving the table a thump in the enthusiasm of the moment; "I believes it. Look you here, Duval. You are took—nabbed—grabbed—flummoxed—and nailed; but it was not in the fair and regular way of business. I hate that sneaking rascal as peached upon you. It's a wrong thing, and we of the purfession is riled at it, and can't stand it and won't stand it, as you see, Duval; we have made up our minds that you shall go to the road again, for you haven't been took off of it in the proper way, not by no manner o' means."

"I quite understand you," said Claude, "and know your sentiments. Only tell me one thing. Will Tom Brereton get the reward?"

"He will."

"I am sorry for that."

"So am I; and so are all of us; but we can't help it. It's only a clear five hundred pounds for lodging you in jail. He'd get a thousand pounds more if you were turned off some fine morning, but that he'll lose. The five hundred pounds though he'll have, and nobody can help it."

"Then listen to me," said Claude. "When I am free, as I suppose now I may conclude I shall be, I will haunt Tom Brereton like his shadow. He can't get rid of five hundred pounds all at once, and I'll have it from him again as sure as my name is Claude Duval; and when I get it, I'll come to the lobby of Newgate and share it among you, if you will pass me your word that I may do so with safety."

"Done!" cried Bill. "If anybody lays a hand upon you, or says a dangerous word about you when you come, they shall walk through me to do it."

"I am satisfied," said Claude.

"Werry good," added Bill. "Perhaps you'd set to work as soon as it's eleven o'clock to-night? You have got a ticker in your fob, and will know the time.

"I have. All's right."

"Good again," said Bill; and having thoroughly concluded his mission, in what he called a highly satisfactory manner, he abruptly left the cell.

"Truly," said Claude, when he was alone, "for strangeness, this beats all my adventures put together. Here, I may say in a manner of speaking, I am

almost jostled out of Newgate and forced upon the road again, whether I will or no. Alas! alas! what a world is this! Here am I made the puppet of circumstances, all because a price is put upon my head. The very thing which was intended to crush me, and destroy me, conspires now with other circumstances to save me. Yes, Cicely, I shall see you once again. Fate has not entirely separated us in this world. My own Cicely, if now after this escape, I could but find a means of quitting England for ever we might be happy; but no—no. Fate, after all, is but a dream. Fate has in too unequivocal a manner pronounced a negative upon my adopting such a course. I must remain in England and fulfil my destiny, let it be what it may.”

From this time until eleven o'clock at night, the minutes seemed to lag very slowly with Claude. He did not think proper to make any attempt to move from his cell previous to the arrival of that hour; for he knew that the officer must have had some sufficient and ample reason for naming it; but he employed the time in freeing himself from his fetters, which, with the admirable tools brought to him by the quaker, he found no difficulty in doing.

The only thing he took from the basket of tools left him by Bill, was a small wrought-iron crow-bar of about fifteen inches in length: and then, for fear of accidents, coiling the rope the quaker had brought him round his waist, he waited for the hour of eleven to come.

CHAPTER LXIX.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S clock struck eleven. Even in his cell, so still was the prison, Claude could hear the faint drowsy echo of the chimes, and then the more full sound of the hour striking.

“It is time,” he said.

For fear of an accidental visit from any one, Claude had kept his fetters in such a position that they did not look to have been disturbed at all; but now that the hour for action had come, he at once shook them off and they fell with a clatter to the ground.

He then took up one of the tools that had a sharp point, and, upon the wall of his cell, he wrote the following lines:—

“Claude Duval was in Newgate thrown,
But he laughed his fill at iron and stone;
He broke many locks, and he cleared the wall:
Heigho for the saddle! says Claude Duval”

“There,” he added, “that will be something of a memorial of me in time to come; and may it put heart to attempt his liberty into any poor devil who may occupy this cell after me.”

Among the things brought to him by the quaker, were matches of phosphorous, then pretty well understood by what was called “the family,” *i. e.* cracksmen and knights of the road; and those matches, together with a small lantern which he could darken at a moment's notice, were likely to be eminently useful to him in his progress through the dark passages of the old prison.

“I almost regret,” he said, as he lighted his lantern, “that these rascals of turnkeys and officers have made up their minds to wink at my escape; for I should liked to have got away in spite of them all, which I do think I could have done; but, perhaps, it's as well as it is, for I now, in a manner of speaking, am sure of my success.”

His first task now was to unlock his cell door, and this he did not find to be a very difficult task, for he had the very finest tools for such a purpose that London could furnish him. The door soon yielded, for as Bill had been his last visitor, he had forgotten (?) to put up an iron bar that was behind it.

With his lantern in his hand, Claude traversed the corridor in which he

now found himself, and he was upon the point of commencing an attack upon one of the double-doors leading into the chapel, when he was arrested by hearing some one weeping. The sound appeared to come from one of the cells opening from the corridor.

"What shall I do?" said Claude. "Ought I to trouble myself about any one else at such a time as this? or ought I to reflect that I have it, perhaps, in my power to restore some one to life and liberty, who may either be wholly and completely innocent, or not very guilty?"

Such a discussion was not likely to last very long in the mind of such a person as Claude. His feelings soon carried the day against his judgment. He made his way to the door of the cell from whence the sobs issued, and placing his mouth to the key-hole, he said, in a low but distinct voice—

"Who are you?"

The sobs suddenly ceased, and all was perfectly still, until Claude repeated his question, and then a voice replied—

"I am a most unfortunate person indeed. Who is it that speaks to me in such a place as this?"

"One who can give you your freedom," replied Claude, "only he is not quite sure that you deserve it."

"Oh, do not say so," replied the voice; "I am merely placed here out of spite on account of some family differences. There is not in all the world, I assure you, be you whom you may, a more innocent person than I am; and if you can only restore me to freedom, you will earn my everlasting gratitude."

"I have no means," thought Claude, "of testing the truth of this man's assertions, but I will run the risk, and let him go with me as far as the street, poor devil."

With this determination, Claude took down the bar of the cell door, and speedily unlocked it. When he flung it open, he said—

"Make as little noise as you can, and follow me; I am, like yourself an escaping prisoner, and we shall require all our skill and caution yet to succeed."

The inhabitant of the cell now came crawling out upon his knees in the most abject manner. The light of the lantern fell upon his face, and Claude recognised Phillip Manning! At the same moment the wretched man caught a sight of, and recognised Claude Duval.

"Mercy! mercy!" he cried.

"Villain!" said Claude, "had it been any other man in Newgate I would not turn my back upon him, but you——"

"Oh no—no—no!—Spare me. Take me with you! Only free me from this dreadful prison, and I will be your servant—your slave. Oh, have mercy upon me!"

Claude turned away in disgust.

"Duval, Duval, do not leave me here. My uncle is cold, and stern, and harsh; he has made up his mind, notwithstanding all the exposure and all the relationship, to leave me to my fate and to the law. Oh, take me with you. You are bold and vigorous, and the stone walls of Newgate cannot hold you. Have pity upon me."

"No, fight your own battles. Remain where you are, for me."

"But I cannot fight my own battles. I have already written a letter to my uncle threatening him that if I am put upon trial, I will insinuate so much against the purity of Grace, that it shall stick to her while she lives, and he took no notice of the letter at all. Oh, save me! save me!"

"You consummate scoundrel! To your cell again!"

"No—no. I have once left it, and I will not return to it. If you will not save me by letting me go with you, I will raise the whole prison by my cries, and swear—for I am ready at any time to swear anything—that I caught you in the act of escaping, and that you were trying to persuade me to go with you and rob on the highway."

Duval had only just patience enough to hear the end of this speech, and it was truly wonderful that he had so much, considering his temperament, but the last words were no sooner out of Phillip's lips, than clapping the lantern on the floor, Claude sprung upon him, and lifting him bodily up with both hands, he flung him into the cell again as though he had been some piece of old lumber, and then banging the door to, he put up the bar again in a moment. All was still. Master Phillip had in all probability been too much stunned by the vengeance with which he was sent back again into his old quarters, to give any immediate alarm of what Claude was about.

Claude was really much more annoyed at this little incident than he chose to confess to himself, and he muttered as he set to work upon the door at the end of the corridor—

“Confound it, who would have thought of lighting upon that one rascal out of all the folks, good, bad, and indifferent, in Newgate? But it serves one right for meddling at such a time with the affairs of anybody one did not know.”

The door he was engaged upon soon yielded, but that immediately behind it, which opened into the chapel, was secured by two strong bolts, one at the top, and one at the bottom of the door, so that he had his work before him to get that one undone.

It was only by boring a hole right through the door, and, with the powerful tools he had, sawing a piece out of it both at top and bottom, that he succeeded in overcoming this obstacle of the bolts, and then having previously shot back the lock, he found himself within the chapel of Newgate, which, by the uncertain light of his lantern, looked of treble its usual size.

He knew that he could much easier leave the chapel, by a door immediately opposite to the one at which he had entered, than he had entered it, for now the bolts were upon his side, and he could withdraw then in a moment. The locks readily yielded, and he then found himself in a corridor very similar to the one from which his cell had opened. It was at the far end of this corridor that he expected to find a door that would lead him immediately into the court-yard that he sought, and which was bounded by the wall, close to the corner of Newgate Street.

He found the door without any difficulty, but to get it open was rather a serious task. The lock was one of a peculiar character, and none of the implements that he, Claude, had, would in any way touch it as regarded opening it. He felt that there was no resource but to set to work getting the lock off bodily; and without a moment's delay he commenced operations. By dint of great labour, he succeeded, in the course of a quarter of an hour, in getting the wedge-end of the wrought-iron lever he had with him about an inch beneath the plate of the lock.

Slowly and cautiously he applied his strength to the other end of the crow bar and it was pleasant to him to hear the creaking and springing of the yielding lock. Then with a sudden bang, like the muffled report of fire arms, the lock, plate came off, and there was no difficulty to contend with, as regarded opening that door, so far as the lock was concerned. Duval did not expect that that door had any other fastening, and he was most disagreeably surprised to find that it did not yield. By a little shaking at it, he found out that there was a bar across it.

This was a serious obstacle, not as regarded the difficulty of removing the bar, but as regarded the time it would take to do so. There was no earthly resource but to absolutely saw through it, and that he immediately set about. Fortunately there was just sufficient space between the door and the wall for him to introduce one of the fine and exquisitely-tempered saws with which he was provided, so that he could begin the work at once.

Rapidly the sharp teeth of steel cut into the soft iron of which the bar was very injudiciously composed, and at length the last obstacle was removed and the door creaked open upon its massive hinges. Then came a rush of

cold air, which was sufficiently convincing to Claude as regarded the immediate proximity of the court-yard.

"Now," he said, "I have but the wall of Newgate to surmount, but that is not the easiest thing in all the world. I must trust to good fortune, however, and a stout rope. I wonder if the officer has been as good as his word, and left a rope hanging from the spikes conveniently?"

Claude thought it was expedient to put out his lantern; for although the night was dark it was not so dark but that with a little practice he could see objects generally in the prison-yard, and there might possibly be some official who, not being in the plot, would consider it a wonderfully meritorious thing to discover him. Besides, if a rope were there at all, it must be hanging close to the wall, so he could not miss it.

The court-yard was small, and Duval soon reached the wall, but scarcely had he done so, when he was somewhat startled by the ringing of a loud bell in the prison. He paused a moment to listen to it, and then suddenly from the deep shadow of an angle of the wall there came a man, who in a low voice, said—

"Quick, Duval, quick. Why, isn't you off?"

"Is it you, Bill?"

"Yes, to be sure; I've been awaiting for you this half-hour. Don't you hear the alarm-bell a-going? Somebody has found out that you are missing. Five or six minutes ago, they said there was a shouting from one of the cells, but that can't have anything to do with you, surely?"

"It's Phillip Manning," thought Claude, "who has given the alarm."

He did not think proper to say as much to Bill, but in the same cautious tone in which he spoke, he said—

"Show me where the rope is, and I'll be off, if I break my neck in the venture."

"This way—this way."

Bill led Claude to the rope, and then holding the end of it, he said—

"You get up it as fast as you can. I'll steady it here below, which will be half the battle. Confound that bell."

The alarm-bell was pulled by one who was not at all niggardly of his labour; and from various closely-barred casements that looked into the court-yard, lights began to flash, while the murmur of loud voices came plainly upon Claude's ears. He sprang several feet up the rope at a bound, and then with great agility commenced climbing hand over hand to the top of the wall.

It was a capital rope for climbing, thick enough, so that Duval was at the top of the wall in an incredibly short space of time. There he found that two strong hooks at the end of the rope had taken a capital hold of the *chevaux de frise* that was upon the top of the wall. It was a dizzy thing to look down upon the lights in the Old Bailey, and to see from that height and that frail, very frail, standing-place, the long perspective of lamps down Skinner street and up Holborn Hill. He had to hold on to the complicated iron-work as best he could. To cross it was a matter of great danger and difficulty.

That was not exactly the time for reflection; and Claude, after shading his eyes with his hand, and taking one long look upon the streets below, from which rose up to him the roar and the clash of life in the countless crowds of London, proceeded to let the rope down on the outer side of the wall.

He tore his clothing and gave himself some slight scratches from the spiked iron-work at the top of the wall, and then he succeeded in fairly launching himself on to the rope. All he required now to do, was to keep himself from any too rude concussion against the wall, and that he managed tolerably well, by pointing his toes against it. In the course of two minutes he was in the Old Bailey.

A man having the dress and appearance of a porter, was the only person passing at the moment, and he, after pausing for a second, with a look of

astonishment as Claude descended and reached the pavement, suddenly rushed forward and seized him by the collar, saying—

“Hilloa, my jail bird, you are taking to your wings, are you?”

“Yes,” said Claude, “and my claws likewise.”

Drawing in a full breath as he spoke, he struck the man such a tremendous blow in the face that he fell to the ground as though a cannon shot had felled him. Duval started off then at a brisk trot, and making his way down Skinner street he soon gained Holborn-bridge. As he ran he heard the sound of the great bell of Newgate, as though it were pursuing him, but he was resolved to go the nearest way he could to the quaker’s in Dean street, and without deviating from his path in the least, he ran up Holborn hill.

“Stop him!” cried a voice. “Stop thief!”

Claude glanced behind him and saw some men running. He had his doubts whether they were after him or not, but he did not think it worth his while to throw a chance away, and being close to Southampton Buildings he darted down that turning, and then taking the first turn he came to, to the right, again he emerged into Chancery Lane. Not wishing then to make his way into Holborn or down the lane to Fleet street, he thought his best plan would be to get through Lincoln’s Inn, and so on by a back route to Soho.

Claude knew that the Inn was closed to all but its inhabitants after nine o’clock, but he crossed over the road and boldly knocked at the old gate.

In the course of about a minute the wicket was unbolied, and a surly-looking man with a nightcap on his head and a lantern in his hand, made his appearance. A sharp scrutiny into Claude’s face satisfied the porter that he, Claude, did not belong to the Inn, and he said in a tone of passion—

“What the devil do you want here? You can’t come in, I tell you.”

“But you can come out,” said Claude.

As he spoke he darted in his right hand, and seizing the porter by the throat, he dragged him through the wicket and hurled him into the middle of Chancery Lane. To step into the Inn and to bolt the wicket on the inner side was Claude’s next step.

“Daniel!” cried a woman’s voice from the lodge. “Daniel, what’s the matter? What’s the matter, Daniel?”

“Nothing,” said Claude. “You be quiet, or I’ll soon make you.”

Without waiting for any reply, he darted across the old square and so on to the new, and then making his way up Cook’s Court, he was duly let out by the porter there, for it is a rule after hours at the Inn to let everybody out but nobody in.

The cries of the men in Holborn, whether they had been directed at Claude or not, had long since died away, and he walked with a deliberate step through the silent purlieus of Clare Market. Drowsy watchmen calling the wrong hour, and asserting the weather to be anything that came uppermost to their minds, were the only persons he met, with the exception of some nymph of the pave who occasionally applied to him an endearing epithet or an abusive one, as her humour at the moment dictated; and so, in less than half an hour after leaving Newgate, he stood upon the quaker’s doorstep in Dean street.

Instant admission was granted him, and he found his hand grasped in that of Jack, who cried—

“Claude, Claude, this is indeed a happy meeting. Both Dick and I said we would meet you, but our friend Franklin declared you would be safer by yourself!”

“Thank you all,” said Claude, “I am safe enough, and glad to see you all.—I don’t think either—indeed, I may say, I am sure, that there is no one upon my track, so all is right so far.”

“Then, friend, Claude,” said the quaker, who had been fastening up the street-door, “let us to supper, for we have waited for you. I said you would be here, friend, at half-past twelve, and it is now not above twenty minutes to one. Didst thou meet with any cross accident?”



"Nothing to signify," said Claude; "but you shall have all the particulars while we are at supper. I feel as though I could do justice to it; let it be as good a one as it may, Mr. Franklin."

"Friend, there are four roast ducks, and a Westphalia ham, together with all sorts of varieties in the way of drink."

"Good; and now can anybody tell me what has become of my horse?"

"I can," said Dick. "He is all right, and as fresh as a daisy on a Spring morning, Claude. You have certainly got the better of the Philistines this time, and no one can rejoice at it more than I do."

"I thank you all," said Claude; "and does Cicely know nothing?"

"She knows nothing," replied Jack; "but suspects much."

"Then, that shall be seen to after supper; I will ride to the farm, and set her heart at rest. Oh, how I long to be in the saddle again, and among the trees and meadows. God, I think I should die soon in the city. Short as has been my stay in Newgate, there have been times when I felt as though I should have gone mad; but that is past now, and in good truth I don't think they will take me again with the breath in my body. This time it was an extraordinary accident, or they would not have had me within the walls of Newgate."

They were now seated at the supper-table, and they all did ample justice to the good cheer of the quaker, after which Claude related to them what had taken place in the prison, regarding the interview he had with Mr. Sago, the attorney, and the singular determination that the officers and turnkeys had themselves come to, to let him escape.

"Friend," said Franklin, "thou wert in luck's way. I know that Sago very well, and thou needest not trouble thyself about any arrangements or promises with him. I will give him a call."

"Thank you; but can any of you now tell me anything of Tom Breton, for I am resolved to keep my word with the officials of the prison, and whatever I can wrest from him of the reward I will take to them. It may serve me in good stead at another time, or a friend, if not myself, may profit by having people well-disposed to me within the four walls."

"That is true, friend," said Franklin; "and I very much applaud thy resolution; I can tell thee where thy old acquaintance, Tom Breton, is; and I can likewise tell thee that he has only received £750 for thy capture. The Secretary of State raised a quibble with him that thou wert already in custody, and kindly added, 'that if he did not like to take the £750 in full, they (the government) were quite willing to meet him in any Court of law upon the subject, for the term of his natural life;' so, with a rare wisdom, Tom Breton took the money."

Claude laughed, and then he said—"And where may I have the pleasure of finding the rascal?"

"He has taken a lodging, friend Claude, at the next house to the corner one of the Edgeware road, and there, most undoubtedly, thou will find the rascal; for he makes no secret of his name or his whereabouts, as he looks upon thee as most comfortably bestowed in Newgate, and that thy first appearance in the open air therefrom will only be to be hanged."

"I am very much obliged to him," said Claude, rising. "It will be quite a charity to undeceive him; Mr. Franklin, I am extremely obliged to you; and for myself and my friends, I feel myself very much your debtor, indeed. I will take good care that you lose nothing by your share in these transactions."

"Friend, I am quite satisfied," said Franklin, rubbing his hands together. "Business is business, and I am quite sure that I shall see thee all again very often. I wish thee all manner of luck, friend."

The servant of the quaker made his appearance, and casting up his eyes in a sanctimonious manner, he said—"Truly, the three animals are at the door."

"What the deuce does he mean?" said Dick.

"He means," said Franklin, "that your horses are ready."

"And, am I, Dick," said Claude, "to have the pleasure of your company? Jack, of course, I counted upon."

"Even so," said Dick. "I am something like you, Claude. I am half dead for want of a sniff of the country air. I am for the road, again, and will ride with you some miles; I then think of going a good many miles off, and trying some of the first-class roads, some hundred miles at least from London. I think there is some fair business to be done."

"Probably enough," said Claude; "but don't let me keep you off Hounslow Heath, if you have any fancy to it."

"No, thank you. I shall try the great north road, for a few weeks, and then who knows but we may meet again. However, I will now ride with you as far as the Edgeware Road, for I presume that is the direction in which you purpose going now?"

"It is; and I will drop in upon my friend, Tom Brereton, as I go along. I am very anxious to get that little piece of business comfortably settled; and I don't think it will take me very long to do it."

"Truly, friend," said Franklin, "you will find him in the first floor of that house that I have named to you; and as he certainly does not expect thee, the surprise will be all the greater, and, of course, quite an agreeable one."

"Very agreeable," said Jack.

They all mounted, and the only person who watched them do so was the drowsy looking guardian of the night, who threw the glare of his lantern upon them, and then as they were just moving off, he cried—

"This is an odd time of night to ride. Who is you?"

"Just run on a few miles, and we will tell you," said Claude. "You can hold on to my horse's tail."

The watchman was waxing very wroth, as they trotted down Dean street, and then emerging into Oxford street, they went on at a brisk canter to the west.

"Ah," said Claude, "this is life, again. Now, indeed, I feel that the blood circulates in my veins. What a different creature to be sure I feel upon my gallant steed in the pure open air. That infernal cell of Newgate would have killed me in another week. Why I can smell the fresh and beautiful vegetation of the country, already."

"Yes," said Jack, "so can I. I love the trees, and the fields, and every sight and sound of the open country. When death comes to me, let it come far away from the smoke and the din of London. But here we are, Claude, at the Edgeware Road. Do you still hold your intention of dropping in on Tom Brereton, to-night?"

"Certainly I do. The sooner the better. By to-morrow at noon the news of my escape from Newgate will be all over London, and upon the very first intimation of such a thing, he will assuredly be off, and I don't want a tedious dance after him. It must be to-night or never that he and I come to a reckoning, and I must beg of you, Dick, to help me."

"Here's the house, then," said Dick, as they all three paused opposite to the house that had been mentioned by the quaker as that in which Tom Brereton had taken a lodging, upon the strength of his seven hundred and fifty pounds. It was a respectable enough looking building, and the first floor was adorned by a pretty balcony, that ran all along the front of the house, and around the wooden rails of which some creeping plants were rather tastefully trailed and trained. The most profound stillness reigned in and about the place.

"I have an idea," said Claude, "that by standing on the saddles of our horses, we can reach the balcony."

"Of course you can," said Jack, "and it will be, by all means, the best way of getting into the house. I will take care of the horses, and see that all is right below here."

"Thank you. I don't anticipate the smallest trouble in the affair. I know our customer pretty well."

Claude walked his steed to a spot exactly under the edge of the balcony, and then admonishing it by his voice to be still, he got upon the saddle and found he could reach the balcony easily enough. After, then, trying some of the bars, to see if they would stand his weight, and finding that, so far, all was right, he drew himself up in a moment, and was fairly in the balcony, somewhat to the detriment of some plants in pots that were placed there; and was speedily followed by Dick Turpin.

"All right?" whispered Jack, from below.

"Yes—yes; you need not keep the horses there, or stay there yourself exactly by the house; it may attract attention, and when we have done all the affair we can jump down."

For the purpose of more effectually frightening Tom, and the woman he had lately taken to live with him, Claude and Dick put crape on their faces and armed themselves with a murderous-looking knife and pistol, as represented in the accompanying engraving.

Claude began operations upon the window that happened to be nearest to him, and soon found that the fastenings were singularly inefficient.

It was a French casement, and in the course of three minutes Claude had opened one of the halves of it, and stepped into Tom Brereton's drawing-room noiselessly, closely followed by Turpin.

It showed what an amount of confidence both Claude and his friends had in the accuracy of any information that might come from Franklin, the quaker, that he should make his way thus into a house, and not feel the least doubt upon the subject of his being upon the right track to find the man whom he sought. And he was quite right in this great confidence that he bestowed upon the word of the quaker, for he was, sure enough, then and there in the lodging of Tom Brereton, who would as soon have expected a visit from the Pope of Rome upon that night as from Claude Duval. The room was very dark, for it was the most obscure portion of the night; but Claude had with him some of the matches which he had used in Newgate upon the occasion of making his escape from that prison, so a small blue flame quickly made itself visible in the drawing-room of Tom Brereton, and illumined by its faint radiance every object.

The first thing that met Claude's gaze, upon the table in the centre of the room, was a decanter half full of wine, with an overturned glass by the side of it. Two candles, very roughly put out, were likewise upon the table, so that there were pretty evident tokens that Tom Brereton had been enjoying himself a little freely during the evening.

Claude lit one of the candles, and then seeing a door a few inches open, which he judged rightly enough led into the bed-room, he cautiously and very noiselessly advanced, and beckoning to Turpin, they entered the sleeping-chamber of the man whom they had come to seek.

They need not to have been at all careful in their approach to Tom Brereton's bed-side, for that individual had taken sufficient wine to steep his senses in forgetfulness; and he was snoring at a furious rate, as he lay upon his back with a flush of unusual colour upon his vulgar and most unmeaning face, and truth compels us to say that the fat lady at his side was in much the same state, and such was the potency of the wine she had imbibed that she never stirred during the whole of the following proceedings, although Tom tried hard to arouse her.

Claude placed the candle upon the dressing-table, and then sat down very composedly by the bed-side. Tom Brereton had a nose in the full acceptation of the term, and it looked so convenient and handy a means of awakening him, that Claude reached his hand towards it, and taking hold of it with his finger and thumb, he gradually tightened his grasp on it.

Tom Brereton moved uneasily, he coughed, shook his head, tossed his arms about, and finally opening his eyes, he beheld, seated by his bed-side, his arch enemy.

Claude let go his nose, which was squeezed perfectly flat, and seemed as though it would never recover its former rotundity, and then, in quite a casual sort of tone, he said—

“Well, Tom Brereton. Here I am, you see.”

Tom Brereton rubbed his nose, and rubbed his eyes. He got half up upon his elbow, and then he rubbed his nose and his eyes again.

“A dream?” he said.

“Look again?” said Claude. “Do I look very visionary? Were those fingers that compressed your nose those of a vision? I repeat, Tom Brereton, that I am here to pay you a visit and to square accounts with you.”

The agonized coward fell back upon his pillow, and uttered a cry of horror and alarm. Claude drew a pistol from his pocket, and placed the cold muzzle of it right within the cavity of Tom Brereton’s ear, as he said—

“Another such cry, and it is your last in this world. You know me, and that I keep my word. Answer me what I shall demand of you, and speak in a low tone, but clearly and distinctly; and as you value your wretched existence let me have no prevarication.”

“The Lord help me!” groaned Tom. “I’m a dead man now—Our father which art in heaven—For what we are about to receive the Lord make us truly thankful—Amen!”

“Peace, idiot?”

“Yes—yes. I—I—am—peace. Oh dear! Oh—oh!”

“How much did you get for denouncing me to the authorities?”

“How—how much? Oh, my dear sir, you can’t believe how very unhappy I have been ever since I had the misfortune to say it was you. Oh, dear, I regretted it so very much, for you know how very fond I am of you. I could quite cry, I could, to think of it.”

“My patience,” said Claude, “is fast leaving me. I ask you how much you got by way of reward for denouncing me at the police office! I warn you now. My finger is upon the trigger of the pistol, and if you tempt me too far by any lies, you are a dead man, and the wall there will be plastered with your brains, if you have any.”

“Oh, gracious, I got seven hundred and fifty pounds. Here’s a horrid fix.”

“It is a fix. Where is the money?”

“Where is the money? Oh, don’t I wish it was here, I’d give it all to you in a moment. It’s in a banker’s hands.”

“What banker? Quick—quick.”

“What banker? Oh—why, it’s in the hands of—of Smith and Company I assure you, in Lombard street, No. 22 and a half, next door to a cake-shop. Oh, dear.”

“Tom Brereton!”

“Yes, my dear, sir. Yes, I am paying all the attention in the world.”

“You have told me a lie about the money.”

“Oh, no—no—upon my honour—upon my soul. I have told the truth.”

“Well, I am sorry for it. I have come here with a determination to have that money or your life—do you hear that?—or your life, Tom Brereton, and I will keep my word. Do you understand that, Tom Brereton?”

“Oh, don’t—oh, don’t. Look in the carpet-bag. Look in the carpet-bag. It’s hanging up behind that cupboard door. Only spare my life. I have not had time to repent yet. I know I’m a sinner. We are all sinners, my dear Mr. Duval; so spare my life do—Amen!”

“If I find the money I will,” said Claude. “But first let me secure this pistol, the muzzle of which is in your ear, in such a way with a piece of whip-cord to the side of the bedstead, that if you make any movement it will go off, and blow your brains out. I shall so escape being myself your executioner.”

Turpin, who had hitherto remained in the shade, now advanced and aided Claude in all these little arrangements.

Claude saw upon the dressing table a large pair of steel snuffers, and an

extinguisher of the same metal. The latter he pushed into Tom's ear, the largest part forwards, so that it felt like the barrel of the pistol, and he wedged it with the snuffers pretty tight.

"Now," he said, "your life is in your own keeping not in mine, and we will see what is in the bag behind the door."

Tom Breton lay flat upon his back with his mouth wide open, and almost afraid to breathe, from the idea that the pistol was ready to go off, and blow his head to pieces upon the smallest amount of provocation so to do, while Claude hastily examined the carpet-bag, in which he found a pocket-book containing notes to the amount of seven hundred and twenty pounds. The deficiency was not of much consequence.

"Hark you, Tom Breton," said Claude. "Your life is spared because I have been successful in finding the money. If I had not, you must have died. I shall now leave you to your own reflections."

"But you don't mean to take it all?" groaned Tom.

"No. I shall leave you the remainder of the thirty pounds. You will then have had much more than I intended to give you."

With this Claude blew out the light, and was proceeding into the other room in order to leave by the balcony in the same way that he had made his way into the house, but Tom Breton called out to him in the most piteous manner, saying—

"Oh, gracious! You are not going to leave me here with this horrid pistol sticking in my ear, that may go off when I least expect it! Only take that away with you, and you may rely on my not making the smallest alarm: indeed you may, my dear sir. Oh, take it away!"

"Ah," said Claude, as he shut the bed-room door; "very likely."

They were not a moment now in reaching the balcony; and then swinging themselves over it, dropped easily to the pavement below, where Jack speedily joined them with the horses.

"Is it all right?"

"Quite," replied Claude. "We have got £720 of the money, and left Tom Breton in such a fright as he will not get over for some time now, I think, and it has all been done without giving the least alarm. I shall be off now to the farm where Cicely is."

"And I," said Dick, "will bid you good night, or rather good morning, for I see a faint light in the east at this corner. Claude, I dare say fortune, good or bad, as the case may be, will throw us together again some day."

"I hope so," said Claude, as he wrung his hand.

"At all events," added Dick, "if I ever hear that anything has gone amiss with you short of your getting a bullet in your brains, I will come to you, and do you all the help I can."

"And I promise the same," said Claude, "if there should be a thousand miles between us. There is no doubt now but that Jack and I will keep company upon the road together, and you may count upon us both at any time, Dick. We shall be only too happy to do you a service."

"I know it," said Dick, as he waved his hand. "Farewell!"

They parted, Dick pursuing his route alone up the Edgeware-Road, and Claude and Jack trotting together through Tyburn-gate, and making their way towards Notting-hill, then a very rural district indeed.

There is something indescribably painful in parting for an indefinite period of time with any one with whom we may have been upon a footing of social intercourse; but when danger such as had hovered about the career of Dick Turpin and Claude Duval had been shared together, and when, under circumstances affecting their lives, mutual fidelity and a mutual friendship had been relied upon, to say "Farewell!" became, indeed, a saddening and a painful thing.

Claude and Jack rode a good mile before they exchanged one word with each other. It was Jack who broke the silence.

"It's very like death," he said, "to part from a friend in this way."

"It is," said Claude. "And yet something seems to tell me that I shall see Dick Turpin again, and that he and I will have yet together some strange and moving adventures. I am seldom wrong in these kind of presentiments."

"Success and good fortune attend him," said Jack; "and who knows, after all, but that he, and I, and you, and Cicely, and Mr. Mark Brereton, may not all get off comfortably from England, and be quite happy somewhere."

Claude shook his head.

"You doubt it, Claude?"

"No, Jack, I do not doubt it. I feel certain now about it. Fate—destiny—the will of Heaven—give the necessity whatever name you will—compels me to run out my allotted course in England. I have tried to get away, as well you know, Jack. I have tried as no man ever yet tried, and I have been foiled. You know I have been cast back as if by the hand of fate. You know that I have been held to England as though by some chain, the firm though invisible links of which are around every limb."

"Yes, it was so," said Jack, mournfully. "I admit that it was so."

"I will not try it again, Jack."

"Well then, we will run our race here, Claude. For myself I care little, so that we run it together; but yet I will confess, it has been often a pleasant day-dream to me, to think that some day, with Cicely, you could sit down and be serene and happy, and free from the constant alarms of this kind of life; but if it cannot be, why there is no help for it."

"None whatever, Jack. So don't let us make ourselves gloomy about what cannot be helped. I am free, and we are once more upon the road together, so let us be as light-hearted as possible. It is the parting with Dick that put us both into this serious strain of thinking, but we will yet hope that this parting will not be for long. We are sure to hear of him, and a dash across the country now and then, to shake hands with him and ask him how he is, although it may cost a hundred mile canter, will not be a very great object."

"I should never grudge such a ride, Claude."

"Nor I; but here we are at the old farm. It's an unlikely sort of hour to rouse people up at, but I know that here I am welcome at any time I like to show myself."

We need not particularize Claude's reception at the farm. We need not say that Cicely was delighted to see him, although his cheek was a little pale. How little did she guess that he owed that transitory loss of colour to a residence in Newgate! We need not say how very welcome Jack was made for Claude's sake.

During the remainder of the night, Claude gave to Cicely a complete history of all that had happened to him since he had seen her, to which she listened with a breathless and soul-absorbing interest. At the mere mention of the dreaded word, Newgate, her colour fled,

"Ah, Claude," she said, "how truly wretched I should have been had I only guessed one half of this. I should have gone distracted."

"There you see, Cicely, how much you have been spared by not knowing it; but the result ought to teach you never to give way to despair, let you hear what you may of me; for you will be able to say to yourself, 'Was he not in a cell of Newgate one night and was he not the next night restored uninjured to my arms?'"

"Yes, yes," said Cicely, as she sank sobbing upon his breast; "and how can I be sufficiently thankful to Heaven that you are here, Claude?"



Claude and his Friends in a Tight Place.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE morning was misty, but yet fresh and beautiful, and Claude, as he sat at breakfast in the ample kitchen of the farm-house, could not help contrasting with a sigh, his mode of life with that of one who, apart from the din and turmoil of huge cities, lived a life of primitive simplicity, and was content to be a waiter upon Heaven's bounty, in the produce of the earth, for his chief good.

"I have often thought, my Cicely," he said, "since fate, or fortune, call it what you will, forbade us to leave England, that we might yet find some quiet, rarely-visited spot, where we might almost fancy ourselves amid the wilds of nature, and there live a life of rural peace."

"Ah, Claude," said Cicely, "if such a dream as that could only once be realized!"

"Do you like the picture?"

"Yes, Claude; with you, it would, indeed, be happiness; but alas! how is such joy to be ours? Should we not live a life of continual apprehension? Would not any chance passenger, who should look at our abode, humble though it were, with more than usual interest, be to us an object of dread?"

"Yes. Yes."

"That life of uncertain peace I almost think would be worse than the present one, with all its terrors. And yet, it might endure until we both are sunk into the grave, where at least we should know peace."

"I will think of it," said Claude, "I will think of it. But now I have yet something to do, which must be done at once."

"What is that, Claude?"

"Nothing of danger, dear one, but something of honour; and there is Jack, I see, coming from looking at our horses. Pardon me a moment, Cicely."

Claude left the room, and met Jack upon the lawn in front of the house. "Jack," he said, "I must go to Newgate with the money that I took from Tom Brereton, and which is justly enough due to the officers, because I promised it to them; notwithstanding, I will admit that their assistance in my escape was little or nothing."

"I approve of the payment," said Jack, "and yet——"

"I know what you would say, Jack. You don't like the idea of my going to Newgate with it."

"In truth, I do not."

"You think that there is danger, but I differ from you," said Claude. "While, of course, I shall take what precautions I can as regards putting on an efficient disguise, in case any one should see me who is not in the plot, I do not think if I went as I am that one of those to whom I really shall take the money would denounce me."

"I don't know," said Jack. "My faith in the fine feelings of police officers, Claude, is not great."

"And I, Jack, have no faith in their fine feelings at all, but I have some faith in their cupidity and in their judgment. If they were to play any tricks with me, the affair would altogether come out in some way; but I will be upon my guard. Get the horses ready, and let us be off to London."

"So soon, Claude?"

"Why, I don't quite expect to get to London very quickly, for to tell the truth, I shall loiter on the road with the hope of an adventure; but be that as it may, I somehow feel that I wish to be on horseback. I will be with you in a few moments."

"Very good," said Jack, "I will bring the horses round, and if we must be of—why we must, that's all. But, Claude——"

"Yes, Jack."

"Would it not be the wisest plan to adopt some disguise at once, so that you would get into London without any news of your being in its neighbourhood getting ahead of you?"

"I hope to be able to pick up some disguise on the road, Jack. The only person I have much to fear is Tom Brereton. He, I have no doubt, by his clamours will raise a pretty hue-and-cry at my heels; but I hope to outwit him yet. He is too contemptible to fight and kill, or that would long since have been his fate, Jack. I cannot bring my mind to do it."

"You are generous to your enemies, Claude, and ever were; but it will stand you in better stead in the long run to be so, than to kill all who stand in your way, I feel assured."

"I think so too, Jack."

Claude took a brief farewell of Cicely, assuring her, that now he was not going upon any undertaking of danger, but merely to pay a little debt that he owed, which would be thankfully received; and then, after a hearty shake hands with all at the farm, he mounted, and with Jack by his side, took the London road again.

Suddenly Jack laid his hand upon Claude's bridle, saying—

"Just look down the road, Claude. What crowd of horsemen is that that I see yonder?"

"Crowd of horsemen—where?"

"Don't advance. We are under the shelter of the trees here now. Do not advance another step, or they will see you. There are some ten or twelve of them, and they are apparently in deep consultation about something."

"It is necessary, Jack, that I should see who and what those men are. Hold the horse a moment, while I scramble up upon this bank and have a good look at them."

Jack held the horse, and Claude having dismounted, got up upon the bank that was close at hand, and being so elevated, he was able to take a good look at the party of horsemen, who certainly, as Jack had said, appeared to be in deep consultation about something. From the glances they repeatedly cast towards the farm-house, and from several of them actually pointing in that direction, Claude had very little difficulty in convincing himself that it was their destination, and such being the case, whom could they seek but himself?

It gave him a pang to think that that place of refuge for Cicely should have been discovered; and it was an additional pang to him to fancy that some evil consequences might possibly fall upon those kind friends who had from time to time, in some sort, jeopardized themselves by giving him shelter.

"Jack," he said, "we have been dogged. Some active enemy has been upon our track. We are not abroad a bit too soon this morning. Those men are after us, or, I should rather say, they are after me, Jack."

"No. Say us, if you say anything, Claude; for your fortune shall be my prison—your prison shall be my prison; so, if they bode harm to you, it is to me likewise. Thank the fates we are out of range of their vision here."

"I think we are. But it will be prudent to keep a little back among the trees. Ah, they have determined to go by the meadows to the homestead, and they are leading their horses through a gap they have made in the hedge-row, yonder.—Now, I'll be bound that those fellows think they have the reward for Claude Duval in their pockets already, virtually."

"Not a doubt of it, Claude, and you may owe this speedy pursuit, you may depend, to Tom Brereton."

"Of that I feel assured. Dismount, Jack. They are looking well and sharply about them, and they may chance to see your head among the trees if you continue mounted."

Jack was off his horse in a moment; and Claude, although he still wanted to watch the movements of his foes from the top of the bank, crouched so low among the blackberry bushes that grew in great luxuriance upon the top of it, that it was next to an impossibility that they should see him.

"They near the house, Jack," he said. "They near the house now. They place sentinels around it. I can see the flash of arms. They have cutlasses and pistols. Ah, how sure they now make of their prey."

"Come down. Come down, Claude."

"Nay—no—no—not yet. Yet a little, Jack."

"Oh, come down. Mount and fly. When they find you are not there, they may be upon your track, and a mile between you and them may be worth your life. Come away, Claude, oh, come away; I implore you now at once."

"Jack! Jack! Cicely is there."

"I am answered, Claude—I confess it, I am answered. We will stay. I had forgotten. Yes, Claude, Cicely is there, and we will stay until you see them leave. Then you will feel that all is right. You will fly then, Claude—will you not? Say that you will?"

"I will, Jack. Hush! They have surrounded the farm-house on all sides. They place their sentinels two together; and now four of them climb the gate, and get into the yard. Ah, the dog flies at them! They have killed

the creature! Oh, that I were there! It fondled upon me but a brief hour ago?"

"It is a cowardly act, Claude. What are they doing now? Tell me or I shall go mad down here with the horses. What are they doing now, Claude?"

"Hush—hush—don't be at all anxious; I will tell you all, Jack. They proceed through the farm-yard. There—there—now they turn the corner of the large wheat stack you recollect, and I can see them no more. They are gone."

"And those who keep watch?"

"They are still in their places, but evidently full of fear. They seem to expect that at a moment we may pounce out upon them, Jack; and then I'll wager my head to a groat, but they would run one and all of them as hard as their legs would carry them."

"They would, Claude, they would; no doubt of that. But do not take your eyes off them for a moment, Claude, I beg of you."

"Trust me, Jack. Ah! what is that? By Heaven, Cicely is out with them; one of them threatens her. Bravo! bravo!"

"What is it? What is it, Claude?"

"Only one of my friends at the farm has knocked the fellow down with a pitchfork, that is all—that is all. It was well and nobly done. How can they think of taking Cicely prisoner? they can have no power to do that. Jack, my duty now is to rescue her. They are evidently bent upon taking her in charge; they cannot have any sort of authority for so doing, and I——"

"Hilloa! hilloa!" cried an angry voice, close at hand. Do you know, fellows, that you are trespassing?"

Claude looked down from the top of the bank on which he was, and saw a stout man with a florid bloated-looking face, and a scrupulously cut coat of parson's black, a bob wig, and in fact the whole accredited costume of a churchman of the period.

"Hilloa!" he cried again. "Are you aware that you are trespassing upon my land? Why the devil don't you keep the high road?"

"We shall be off directly sir," said Jack.

"Ay, ay, I dare say you will be off directly, you vagabonds; but that won't suit me. I believe that you are no better than you should be, either of you, if indeed you are not highwaymen. Of course you will be off directly if you can, but we will see about that. I don't exactly let fellows off directly that I find some twenty paces within one of my preserves, I can tell you. I am in the commission of the peace, and I order you both to follow me to my house. We will soon see who you are."

Claude jumped down from the top of the hedge, and looked curiously at the parson. He walked quite round him once, and then suddenly sliding up to him, he placed himself back to back with him, and gave him a sharp rap on the back of his head with his (Claude's) head.

"The very thing," said Claude. "This is providential."

"You infernal rascal!" cried the parson, stamping with fury; "what do you mean by all this mummerly!" If you think that impudence will serve your turn, you are very much mistaken. "I'll pretty soon have you both laid by the heels."

"Stop him, Jack."

Jack placed himself in the parson's way, so that when he turned off to go in quest of assistance, he fell right into Jack's arms.

"Gently, Jack," said Claude, "respect the church. I look upon this as a most providential occurrence, reverend sir."

"A providential fiddlestick, you rascal. How dare you detain me one moment? Do you know the consequences?"

"Yes," said Claude, "the consequences are of course all the mischief you can possibly do; and as for the right—I confess it is just now, as is too often the case, the right only of might. But you would be wise to submit, seeing that you are in a decided minority here."

"I will call for help—I will make myself heard. Help! help! hel—mur—der! murder! don't."

Claude had clutched him by the throat, and held him with a grasp that rather interfered with the reverend gentleman's breathing functions.

"Will you be quiet?"

"Yes, yes; but don't choke me—don't choke me. I will be quiet. Take your hand off my throat."

"Certainly I will," said Claude, as he released the parson from the hold he had taken of him. "There is no occasion for more choking than is just sufficient, my dear sir."

"What—what do you want? Be off with you, both at once. I don't want to have anything further to say to either of you. Be off."

"Not quite yet," said Claude. "Bring him along, Jack, further among the trees. This place is rather too open."

"If you intend to murder me, I may as well resist here as further on in the preserve. I may as well chance my life here, and cry again for what help I can hope to get."

"Hark you, sir," said Claude. "I am no murderer. I am not a man to do any deed of violence, unless much pushed to it by those who are imprudent enough to force me to it. You will not have a hair of your head injured, but peculiar circumstances make it a matter of necessity that I should borrow your wig, and your hat, and your coat, and possibly your breeches."

The parson's mouth opened to a ludicrous extent.

"What!" he cried. "Rob me of my clothes?"

"Oh, dear no, my good sir. I'd as soon rob a church, and walk off with the pulpit on my back. I will only borrow them for the occasion, and you may depend upon having them again. Bring him along, Jack, gently. Mark me, sir, you are in no personal danger unless you wilfully create it for yourself."

The parson seemed to think that submission was now decidedly his best policy. He was in the hands of two strong well armed men, and from the language used by one of them it was quite clear, whatever might be his companion's mode of operation, that he was not to be trifled with.

"My good fellow," he said, "if this is a joke it has been carried far enough. I promise you, upon the word of a gentleman, that I will take no notice of what has passed, but you must permit me to go at once."

"Sir," said Claude, "I would take your word in a moment, but I really have use for the things I mention. All I can promise is that I will take them in as little offensive a manner as I can."

By this time Jack had led the parson some paces further into the preserve, which was uncommonly well wooded. The two horses followed of their own accord. The example of Claude's horse was having a great effect upon the civilization of Jack's steed. Claude then hastily divested himself of all his upper clothing, saying as he did so—

"Now, sir, pray make your choice: shall my friend here help you off with your things, or will you oblige us by taking them off yourself? Time is precious. Jack, open the valise, and get yourself into your groom's clothing."

"That's soon done," said Jack.

"The deuce take it," cried the parson. "How many of the things do you want, sir?"

"Only your coat, waistcoat, cravat, wig and hat; I have a dark silk pair of breeches on that will answer the purpose. Be quick."

Rather sullenly the parson took off the required articles, and flung them on the ground. In a few moments he was divested of them, and Claude, who was just about his size, looked amazingly well in them. The wig and hat completely altered the whole character of his physiognomy; and Jack having procured his groom's coat and hat from the valise, examined Claude's

other clothes into it, and was quite ready to personate a respectable domestic.

"Now, sir," said Claude, "when you tell this story, as of course you will have the imprudence to do, do not say that we used the smallest violence of an unnecessary character to you. From the moment of your submission not a hand has been laid upon you except in courtesy."

"Confound your courtesy!"

"As you please; but it is now necessary that for one hour I should not be interfered with in my movements. How am I to know that you will not, the moment my back is turned, emerge from this wood, and raise a hue-and-cry after me?"

"Don't you expect me to do so?"

"Certainly I do, but if you will give me your word of honour, as a gentleman, that you will not, I will take it."

"Oh, Claude," said Jack, in a low tone, close to him, "are you going to trust a parson?"

"I think we may, Jack."

"Let me go at once," said the parson, "and I give you my word of honour, that I will say nothing of what has happened here."

"I hope I shall not be deceived in you," said Claude. "It will be the worse for some unlucky man upon some other occasion, if you break your word."

"I will keep it. But will you tell me who you are?"

"Yes, if you wish it. I am Claude Duval."

"By Heaven, I thought as much. Your secret shall be safe with me, Duval. You stopped a coach once in which was a lady of my family, in delicate health. She told you as much, and you behaved with great forbearance. A fright would have killed her, but you did not alarm her. You may depend I will not say a word about you, and if I had but known it was you, I should not have interfered with you at first."

"Very well, sir," said Claude. "I am rejoiced that we part upon such good terms. Take your road home, sir."

"And with a price upon your head, you will really run the frightful risk of my raising my servants, and the whole country about you, in the course of a quarter of an hour?"

"Yes," said Claude, with true dignity. "I feel and I know that I owe my safety to running such risks. I am in the habit of trusting all sorts and conditions of people, and to that trustfulness I owe that I am now alive."

"It may be so. Good-day. Ah, what throng of persons is this coming this way. I can see them in the road, through the trees, yonder."

"Go home, sir," said Claude, "and keep faith with me. I have some business with those people."

The parson made a slight bow, and in his shirt-sleeves, went a roundabout way to his house, where he knew he could pass through a private garden to his study without being seen by any one of his household.

"Come, Jack," said Claude. "Those with whom we must exchange a few words, are upon the road, I think, now. Do you not hear them?"

"I do, Claude, I do."

Claude and Jack led their horses to the margin of the road, and then they mounted. Jack, as he was bound to do, to be in keeping with his character of groom, fell back about fifty paces in the rear, and at a sober trot, Claude advanced to face the horsemen, who were the same that had by this time searched the farm-house for him, in vain.

What a pang it was to his heart to see that two of them were dismounted, and that they had Cicely between them, who had hastily thrown a shawl over her shoulders, upon being told that she must accompany the party.

Close by her, came the young man who had struck one of the officers with a pitchfork. He was guarded by two of the party; and, following the whole, came some members of the family, who were resolved to see the issue of the affair, and justice done to Cicely and their own relation.

One and all appeared thoughtful, though they rejoiced that Claude had got clear of the premises before the arrival of such a force to capture him.

When Claude appeared upon the road, the party came to a halt. Cicely and her friends knew him by his horse; and as they saw that he was disguised, they had the prudence to forbear from making any exclamation, or giving their captors the least idea that he was known to them.

Claude, when he saw that he was fairly seen, put his horse to a canter, and came directly up to the part.

"What is all this?" he said.

One of the men, a London officer, and as it appeared, the only real officer among the whole, for he had merely got those who were with him to assist for the occasion, rode up to Claude, and touching his hat respectfully, said—

"I presume, sir, I am speaking to the Reverend Peter Rickman?"

"Well, sir?" said Claude.

"Oh, very good, sir. I was coming to your house, sir, which they told me was near at hand. We have had a hunt for the famous Claude Duval, sir."

"And have you found him?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, that we have not. We had certain information that he was concealed in a farm-house, sir, close at hand to here, and we made sure of him; but, somehow, he eluded us."

"Who gave you the information?"

"Why, you will hardly believe it, sir, but it was Dick Turpin."

"Dick—Turpin!"

Claude at the moment nearly fell from his horse, so great to him was the shock of this information.

"Yes, sir. Here is the note. It came to me in London last night, and I, of course, acted upon it, as you see, sir, but missed the rascal. Of course, sir, I should not show the note to anybody but you, but it is quite at your service, sir. Here it is."

"Oh, certainly, certainly. Let me see."

Claude took the note, and read the following words:—

"Duval is at a farm on the Uxbridge road called Shaw Hill Farm. You will find him there for a surety."

"DICK TURPIN."

"Ah," said Claude, as he put the note in his pocket, "so I see! exactly! Well, what do you want me to do now? You have not caught him you say, so I can do nothing at all in the matter."

"No, sir, we have not got him, but we have got his wife, sir."

"Is she a highwayman likewise?"

"Oh dear, no, sir; certainly not."

"Then why have you taken her into custody?"

"Why, your worship, you see, I thought it would be just as well to commit her to prison for a week or two, and see if we could not get out of her, by frightening her, where Claude Duval was likely to be nabbed. That was my idea, sir; and besides, they say he is precious fond of her and having her in the jail at Guilford would be sure to keep him in the neighbourhood."

"A very good plan, my friend, only illegal."

"Oh, sir, the London magistrates, with such sort of gentry, don't much mind whether they are on the right or the wrong side of the law. You know they are not the sort of people to bring their actions for false imprisonment and all that sort of thing."

"And do you fancy, sir," said Claude, in a tone of indignation, "that I am going to make Guilford gaol an Inquisition? Do you fancy I am going to expose myself to the censure of the Secretary of State by so glaring an act as sending a woman to prison because she was the wife of a man against whom I suppose you have a warrant?"

"Oh, yes, your worship; I have a warrant."

"For the apprehension of Claude Duval, but not for the apprehension of his wife, I presume."

"No, sir. I—I—certainly. A-hem! And your worship, then, thinks it's a mistake to take the—the female?"

"A mistake, sir? It's a villany. Release her directly. I order it. It's something new in this country, that the wives of felons are to be apprehended, merely on account of that connexion."

"Yes; but, your worship, you know it is felony to aid, and abet, and comfort and so on, any one who has committed a felony."

"Why, who in the name of all that's wonderful, should comfort a man if his wife don't? Have you got a wife, sir?"

"Yes. I—I——"

"Release that woman directly, and let her go where she likes. Of course she will go back to where you took her from. What has this man been doing, that you have him a prisoner likewise?"

"Why, sir, one of my party—that one with the handkerchief round his head—only just laid hold of the arm of the wife of Duval, and said in quite a quiet way 'Come along with us, and we will soon see how the air of Guildford gaol agrees with you,' when this young man ups with a pitchfork and knocks him down; so of course we took him, your worship."

"Then, my friend, of course you must let him go again, for your man who got the crack on the head with the pitchfork was in the commission of an illegal act, so it served him right. I order that man's release."

"But, your worship—Really, your worship!"

"No words, sir. If you dispute my authority, you are at perfect liberty to do so. Carry your prisoners where you like, and take the consequences of doing so. I am quite willing."

"Oh dear, no, sir. Your worship's authority is, of course, sufficient. I am only very sorry I have done anything that your worship disapproves of; but I will be more cautious another time."

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE whole of this discourse was listened to by Cicely in a perfect fever of apprehension lest Claude should be discovered. It seemed to her as though it would be impossible that Claude could, in so very hazardous a conjecture, possess nerve enough to outface a dozen men with such deceit. But even Cicely, well as she thought she knew him, yet knew not the amazing courage and coolness which he could exercise.

Most emphatically we may truly say, that Claude was never below the occasion.

"Very well," said Duval. "You will say that you met me, and that will be sufficient. There can be very little doubt but that Claude Duval is upon the Guilford road somewhere, and as I really feel strongly regarding his capture—indeed, I may conscientiously say that no one can possibly feel a stronger interest in his apprehension than I do, except it may be his wife here—I will give fifty pounds among you if you catch him within twelve hours."

"Fifty pounds, your worship?"

"Yes, I have said it; and there are quite witnesses enough to hear me, should they be required. But, mind—you must have him within twelve hours from now."

"Come on! cried the officer. "We are very much obliged to your worship, indeed. He can't be very far off, and if we don't have him it won't be my fault; I am considered one of the most wide awake officers in London, your worship, though I say it myself, who, perhaps, should not. But it's well known that it's quite impossible to take me in."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, your worship. I have cut my eye teeth; I wish your worship a

good morning. Come on, my good fellows. We shall make a good morning's work of this yet. Let the prisoners go. We don't want to be encumbered with them now. We all wish your worship good day, and hope we may come to speak to you of that little affair of the fifty pounds."

The men whom the officer had in his service, were all pretty well mounted, and it was quite a sight to see how they all rode off now, leaving behind them the very man, of all others, whom they would have galloped twenty miles to see; and notwithstanding all his courage, Claude, even with the assistance of Jack, could have had but a poor chance in the open road against so many.

With what a look of joy Cicely regarded Claude as all her foes thus galloped off upon a wrong scent, leaving to him the mastery of the field. When their horses' hoofs began only to sound faintly in the distance, and when it was quite out of the question that any of them should see what was going on amid the little group of friends they had left behind them, Cicely sprang to Claude, exclaiming—

"You are saved! You are saved!"

"Yes, Cicely, for this time, I am, and you too."

"Do not think of me, Claude. All the danger is to you. But do not linger here. You cannot possibly maintain this disguise for long; and those men, who are in too great force to cope with, may return yet to your detriment. Oh, fly!—fly!"

"Yes, I can well imagine," said Claude, "that this neighbourhood is not just now the safest for me, nor is it for you, Cicely; for when it is found out that you have been liberated without authority, there is no knowing what injustice may be perpetrated against you. I must leave here, but you must leave with me."

"That is true," said Jack.

"We will protect her with our lives," said the people who belonged to the farm. "You know, Claude, that we will protect her to the utmost stretch of our power so to do."

"I do know it, my friends," said Claude, "and that is yet another reason why I should not bring ruin and trouble beneath your roof by your being good to me and to mine. Will you come with me, Cicely?"

"To the world's end, Claude."

"We shall be very loath to part with her," said the young farmer. "Will you come back when the danger is blown over, which it soon will?"

"Yes," cried Cicely. "I will come back again, and when I shall return here I shall feel myself happy, for the happiest and serenest days I have known have been spent beneath the roof of yon farm-house. I am ready, Claude."

"If it must be so, then," cried the young farmer, "why it must, and I can't deny the reason of the thing. I will go and get a horse for Cicely from the farm stables, and then—Ah! To your arms, Claude.—Who have we here?"

A single horseman, wrapped up carefully in a very capacious cloak, rode among the group.

"You are more bold than prudent, sir," cried Claude, as he dashed towards the intruder, but then he suddenly checked himself, for the horseman let fall the portion of his cloak that covered the lower part of his face, and disclosed that he was the very justice from whom Claude had borrowed the suit of clothes that he then wore.

"What, sir, is your errand here?" said Claude. "I am very unwilling indeed to quarrel with you."

"There is no occasion. Am I right in supposing that the group of horsemen who have just now passed me on the road, after some rather rude scrutiny have taken you to be me?"

"They have, sir," said Claude, "but I am very happy to find they have not paid you the doubtful compliment of taking you for me."

"That they certainly have not. Will you confide in me so far as to tell me what you have said and done in my name?"

"Willingly, sir."

Claude then in a very few words told the justice what had past, including the offer of the fifty pounds, and saying how he thought it necessary to take Cicely to town in consequence of what had taken place.

"You can do that or not do it," said the justice, "as you see fit; I have already told you that on account of a near and dear relation of mine, I owe you a debt of gratitude. I will make an attempt to repay it by taking upon myself all that you have said and done in my name. The arrest of your wife is surely illegal, and consequently the assault committed in her defence is no offence. So far, then, in your favor, I can go, and after that remember that I know nothing whatever of you. I now leave it quite to yourself to decide whether you need take your wife to London or not, only I hope you will be sufficiently careful of yourself, as to keep from being called upon for that fifty pounds you so liberally promised for the capture of Claude Duval."

Slightly touching his hat, then, and not waiting for one word in answer to this generous speech, the justice at once rode away from the spot, leaving them all quite astonished at his conduct.

"What an injustice that man did himself," said Claude, "upon our first interview together. How much of the gentleman it is evident he can really be. May I trust him? What is his character in the neighborhood?"

"He is considered," said the young farmer, "a violent but not altogether an unjust man. He is passionate in the extreme."

"That will do," said Claude, "I will trust him, then. Cicely, I now, with the permission of our kind friends, urge your stay here, where you know and are known, in preference to concealment, with all its troubles in London."

"Your will, Claude, is my law. I will stay, and you will come to me as soon as may be?"

"Trust me, Cicely. I will, I feel that I ought to place it beyond a chance, that the justice should not have to pay the fifty pounds; so, for fear our friends on horseback should chance to have any kind of misgivings, and come back again, Jack and I will be off at once at a good pace."

Claude stooped from his horse and kissed the brow of Cicely; and then smiling an adieu to his friends of the farm-house, he cried to Jack—

"Off, and away, Jack! Let us place a mile or two of ground between us and those who are so anxious to be better acquainted with me this morning than suits my convenience."

"Ready," said Jack.

They both put their horses to a gallop, but not a distressing one, and off they went.

"The parson did not ask for his coat again," said Jack, as they slackened their pace about a mile on the country side of Tyburn-gate.

"No, Jack; and do you know I begin to like that fellow."

"It's the first parson, then, Claude, that ever you did like."

"Yes, and it only shows us how careful we ought to be in condemning whole classes of men, even if the great majority should happen to be no better than they should be. That parson has, no doubt, a bad temper; but the great distinction between a bad-tempered man and a bad-disposed man, should never be forgotten. Pay the toll, Jack."

Jack paid the toll at Tyburn-gate, and they passed on to Oxford-street.—As they got into that even then populous thoroughfare, they thought it advisable to keep up to a greater extent the difference between them as regarded the appearance of master and man.

"I will take my place," said Jack with a smile. "I will, however, be sufficiently near to be of assistance in case of anything happening amiss."

"Thank you, Jack. You have only to say the word at any time, and you know I shall be quite willing to play the man while you play the master."

"Pho! pho! Claude. I hope we understand each other better than that. It is all right. Push on, and for my part I don't care a straw what part I play, so that we are as soon as possible clear of London."

"I shall not linger in it a moment longer than may be absolutely necessary, Jack."

With this, Claude at a steady canter, still attired in the very respectable costume of the country clergyman, made his way down Oxford Street, and Jack kept at the orthodox distance from him that a groom ought to observe, and by the steady demure look which he put on, made himself in all respects a suitable attendant upon a gentleman of his master's presumed cloth and standing in the church.

To be sure there were several persons who knew a little of such matters, who paused to cast a glance of admiration at the superb horse which the supposed clergyman rode, and then to admire likewise the animal upon which his groom was mounted; but none of these had the least suspicion that they were either of them other than they looked.

In this wise, then, Claude and Jack reached Holborn, and keeping to the highway for the whole distance, they arrived at the corner of Old Bailey.—There Claude paused, and Jack in a moment was by his side.

"I think, Jack, I will dismount here, and walk to the gate of the prison."

"Oh, Claude," whispered Jack. "As I came along Holborn, the danger, and I might almost say the folly of this desperate expedition has come strongly across my mind. Up to this point, I do believe, although we have terribly tempted our fate, that we have come safely; but now I beg you to go no further."

"Nay, Jack, I must keep my word with the turnkeys and the officials of Newgate—they must have the money."

"I don't speak for the money, Claude; but for you. Let them have the money; I think, under all circumstances, that it is much better that they should; but you really expose them to too much temptation by going with it yourself.—I will take it."

"And what will they think, Jack? Why, just that I was afraid to go myself with it; and if once the feeling gets abroad that Claude Duval was afraid of any thing, it will be soon all over with me. No, Jack, don't think that there is any danger. You wait here, with the horses; and you may depend I will cut the interview as short as I possibly can."

CHAPTER LXXII.

JACK knew well enough, from old experience, that when Claude had made up his mind to anything, no appeal to his fears was at all likely to have the least effect in turning him from his purpose; so when he spoke so decidedly, Jack said no more, but, with a sigh, took the horse by the bridle and prepared himself to wait with what patience he might the return of his friend.

And now, who that had seen Claude upon that occasion—and there were many who saw him—could for one moment have supposed that he was going upon so hazardous an expedition? Who could have thought that there was the man, who, with almost incredible courage and skill, had so recently escaped from Newgate, and who had now ridden a dozen miles to come and tap its wicket, and with a certainty of being known too?—for he did not mean to attempt to deceive the officers who might be in the lobby, with regard to his identity.

But a little consideration will show that in the very boldness of this proceeding lay its security. No one but the officers to whom he intended to make himself known could dream that he was there; and as cupidity and personal interest is well known to be the main-spring of action, it was quite

clear that their best plan was to take what Claude now brought them, and let him go again, making sure of him, as they did, at some other time, when no charge of betraying their trust, or of being paid by Claude Duval, would be brought against them; whereas, if they now were to betray him, of course he would relate the whole affair, to their discomfiture.

Thus then was it, that, viewing the whole affair, Claude did not think that he was running a great risk.

When he reached the wicket gate of Newgate he had to pause for a moment to allow some one to come out. It was a gentleman, very plainly dressed; and the glance at the face that Duval caught convinced him at once that it was Judge Manning.

An irresistible desire to speak to the father of Grace came over Claude, and stepping after him, he slightly touched his arm, saying—

“Have I not the honor of addressing Judge Manning?”

At the sound of his name, the judge turned, and bowing slightly, he said—

“I regret that I have not the pleasure of recollecting you, sir: I am the person you name.”

“Is my disguise so good,” said Claude, “that the father of Grace does not recollect Duval?”

The judge started as he said—

“Good God! what do you do here?—can you be tired of your life that you linger in this neighborhood? I was in hopes that by this time you were far away from London. Do you want money? Command me if you do so; or any other way that I can be of use to you.”

“Many thanks,” said Claude; “but I can manage very well. I hope your daughter is well.”

“Quite well; and full of gratitude to you and your friends for her preservation. Let me beg of you to come to my house, and speak with me about your future prospects. I think something may be done for you to withdraw you from the mode of life you follow, indeed I do.”

“Alas! sir, I fear not.”

“Nay, you are apt enough to think, that because you have been long in such a line of life as this, that there is no resource for you in any other; but in some other country, surely you might find peace and happiness, and honest prosperity.”

“Sir, I thought so once.”

“And why not now? You are young.”

“Once, sir, I made the attempt to leave England, but I was hunted back, even from the coast. A price was set upon my head, and I was worth too much to the officers and blood-hounds of the law to be let escape them so easily. They hunted me back again, sir, and the consequence is that I am what I am, and what I ever shall be while life remains to me.”

“Do not despair. Only say you will call upon me.”

“I will, sir. Name your own hour.”

“This day if you can. Come home now with me, if it is convenient to you; I wish to do all that I can to repair the involuntary injury that I did you, by taking you to the police-office, and so giving the opportunity to your foes of declaring who and what you were. Will you come with me now?”

“I have a little business to transact in this neighborhood, sir, and when that is done I will be with you.”

“Enough. I will take such measures that you shall both come and go with perfect safety.”

“Expect me, then, sir, if nothing happens to stay me. Mine is an eventful life. The hands of many men are raised against me, and but few for me, so that in a great measure I am the slave of circumstances; but I will come to you if nothing of a serious character happens to prevent me.”

With this Claude and the judge parted, and the former once more made his way to the wicket-gate of Newgate. He ascended the steps, and tapped at the entrance.

"What now?" said the turnkey.

"Is Joliffe within?" said Claude, naming one of the officers whom he knew was in the plot for favoring his escape from the prison.

"Perhaps he is, and perhaps not. Come in and we will soon see. Come in if you pleases. This here way, sir."

The highly respectable appearance of Claude induced an amount of unusual respect upon the part of the turnkey. The little gate was opened, and Duval was once again in the lobby of Newgate, and the key turned upon him. A couple of the officials of the prison were lounging about, and in one of them Duval recognized the man who was usually called Bill, and who had been the one that had come to his cell to give him a hint that he might escape if he would. Upon this Claude touched him by the arm, saying—

"I think there is quite enough present for the transaction of business. I have come to settle a little account."

"A little what?" cried Bill.

"A little account. Don't you expect something among you all from one Claude Duval?"

"By all that's outrageous, it's him," said Bill, staggering back. "Why, Duval, you have got the courage of ten men and a half, to come here in such a way. What do you expect we are to do?"

"Take your money to be sure, and not make fools of yourselves. All that Tom Brereton got was seven hundred and fifty pounds. There's seven hundred pounds. Take it all, and don't then, say that I was worse than my promise. Divide it equitably among you, and when we do meet again, perhaps you will remember that Claude Duval is always as good as his word, and at times a little better."

The prison officials glared at him as though he had been some apparition. The idea of a man with such a price upon his head calmly coming to Newgate, was beyond their comprehensions; and the additional idea of his voluntarily parting with such a sum of money was to them quite staggering.

"Now," added Claude, "as I don't at all admire the architecture of this place, nor its air I will bid you good morning."

"Duval," said Bill, as he flung open the wicket, "you are a regular game one. This here is a story that it won't do to tell; but we shan't forget it for all that. You is a trump, and if you are brought into the jug again, and I'm in the land of the living, you will find a friend here."

"But," said the man on the lock, "ought we—dare we—I say Bill? blue murder to let him go again. Its—"

Bill sprang at the turnkey and held him by the throat, as he cried—

"Cut it, Duval. Cut it while I throttle him. Cut it at once, afore some other wagabone wants to nab you."

Claude darted from the lobby; but it so happened that some one was ascending the little stone steps leading from the pavement to the wicket-gate at that moment; and Claude came out with so much force and precipitation that he encountered the person; and at once upset him, and rolled him over steps and pavement into the not very salubrious kennel of the Old Bailey.

"Murder! Murder!"

"The devil!" said Claude. "I ought to know that voice." He glanced at the fallen man, and at once recognized Tom Brereton, who at such a very inopportune moment had arrived at Newgate to hold a consultation with his friend, the Governor, about the loss of the money that Claude had taken from him, and just made so liberal a use of.

"Confound you," said Claude.

"Murder! Murder! Help!"

"Be quiet, idiot, will you?"

Probably Claude would have said something more threatening to Tom Brereton; but several people began to collect; and others from the opposite side of the way began to cross over, so Claude thought it prudent to get away as quickly as he could; for although he had not as yet been recognized

by Tom Brereton, he did not know the moment when he might be; for that personage knew him rather inconveniently well.

Accordingly, then, Claude, with rapid steps, made for the corner of the Old Bailey, by Newgate Street, where Jack was, with no small amount of impatience, waiting with the horses. Jack, from where he was, could see that there was some sort of bustle at the door of Newgate; but when he observed Claude coming towards him, he felt it as a great relief to find that he was not in it in any way; but this was an opinion which he soon found the most ample cause to correct.

Tom Brereton, after rolling a sufficient time in the kennel to give himself the lively appearance of a man who had taken a mud-bath, rose full of ire and indignation; and the mob, that had collected with the marvellous rapidity that mobs collect in London, giving way before so muddy an assailant, permitted him to rush after Claude, at a furious rate.

"Stop! stop! you villain!" cried Tom Brereton. "You shall pay for my coat—you shall! Stop him! stop him!"

Claude sprang into his saddle.

"Good Heavens!" said Jack. "What is all this about?"

"Nothing particular," said Claude. "He don't know me. Push on towards Smithfield, Jack. He may recognize us, yet."

"Stop him!" still cried Tom Brereton. "Him on the black horse. Why—why that's Claude Duval's horse, the famous highwayman. Murder!—That's Claude Duval!"

"Who—who?" cried the mob in chorus.

"Claude Duval, the highwayman. Murder! murder!"

Tom Brereton was knocked down, and trampled over by at least twenty people in a moment, and a whole chorus of voices shouted—

"Stop him! stop him! A highwayman! Stop him! There he goes—a highwayman! Stop him!"

"We are rather in for it, now, Jack," said Claude.

"We are lost!"

"Not at all. Push on, and follow me. This way—this way. Don't look behind you, and if any one should touch you or your horse, down with him with the loaded handle of your whip. We will show them some sport yet, or I am much mistaken."

At a smart hand gallop, Claude and Jack made their way to Giltspur Street, and dashed into Smithfield. The alarm had been so sudden, and the escape so quick, that the people on each side of the way looked about them in a scared kind of a way, not knowing what it was all about.

Jack kept as close to Claude as he possibly could do without impeding him in his flight, and so they got through the area of old Smithfield with incredible rapidity. Jack had now—as in fact, he always had—the most unbounded confidence in the resources of Claude, and so, when he found that they were really distancing the crowd rapidly, much of the fear that at first had taken possession of him, dissipated. He held his bridle more firmly in his left hand, while in his right he brandished the heavy riding whip with which Claude advised him to clear his way.

"On—on!" cried Claude.

Some man with a metal badge upon his arm, and whose general ruffianly appearance without that would sufficiently have proclaimed his connection with the market, which was then almost as gigantic a nuisance as it is now, made a sudden rush at Claude from among the sheep-pens, crying, as he clung to his bridle—

"I have him!—I have him! He won't shake me off in a hurry."

Crack went the loaded handle of Claude's riding whip upon his skull, and down the fellow went as though he had been shot.

"One fool less in Smithfield, I think," cried Claude. "On Jack, on! Follow me closely."

"I am here, Claude."

Claude kept an even, onward course, and before three minutes could have expired from the moment that the horse first sprang from the corner of Newgate Street, he and his master were in Barbican.

"Ah," thought Jack, "I know where he is going to now. Claude, you will go to Stevens's?"

"Yes. Push on."

But now, the first panic and surprise of the people on the route of the two flying men, had in some measure subsided; and they were able fully to understand what was amiss. The cry of "A highwayman! a highwayman!" came from at least a hundred throats; and in that extraordinary manner that a whole population will, at times, without knowing very well why or wherefore, hunt some one person, the greater number of the people in the streets joined in the race.

But still, the great advantage Claude and Jack had, was, that they were sufficiently in advance to come continually upon fresh people, who, although they heard that something was amiss, did not, until the two hunted men had passed, positively connect them with the tumult; and so they dashed on down Barbican and turned into Redcross Street.

The moment they turned the corner of that street, they were out of sight of every one, who with distinct notions that they were the parties to be apprehended, were pursuing them; and then it was that Claude felt if anything was to be done for their safety, it must at once be attempted,

About half way down Redcross Street, was a small shop, where cigars, then rather a rarity, and pipes, and various tobacco, were sold, or pretended to be sold. The doorway of this little shop was rather lofty, although not so lofty as to attract any attention of a particular character to it. But it had its uses.

Casting around him a rapid glance, which assured him no one was observing him, Duval rode his horse full at the doorway of the little shop, and in he went, horse and all.

Jack followed him.

"Hilloa, Stevens!" cried Claude.

"Here!" said a man, half-dressed, rushing from a back room with great precipitation. "Here!"

"Is it all right?"

"As a trivet, master. That will do."

Stevens darted past the two horses and banged shut his door in a moment, and shot a couple of bolts to it. Then taking the bridle of Claude's horse in his hand he, shouted—

"Ann! Ann! Ann!"

"Here ye is," said a dirty looking girl, making her appearance, and holding on her clothes, for they had the appearance that if she were to leave go of them, they would all tumble off together, leaving her beauty unadorned.

"Take the horses to Philips. Be quick. Ah, I hear cries. Why, captain, they are hard and fast on your track. Be off, Ann—no faster than you can."

Both Claude, and Jack, dismounted, and Ann took the bridles of both of the steeds in one hand, and in another moment disappeared with them down a long gloomy looking passage.

"A highwayman! a highwayman!" cried the mob in the street. Stop him! stop him! A highwayman!"

"Is them your friends, captain?" said Stevens.

"I suppose so," laughed Claude.

"Ah, the poor deluded wretches! But howsomdever, there's no saying but somebody may have seed you come in here, so come on, and I'll soon take yer by the old move to the Pine Apple. Lord bless you, captain, you would hardly think how many gentlemen on the road, and off the road, have made their way to the old crib through my shop, and no one none the wiser. If the hole in the wall was only better kivered up than it is, they would have found it out long ago."

"Yon still use the water-butt, Stevens?"

"Bless you, yes."

"It's a good plan."

"Lor, captain, there's nothing ekal to it. You know, sir," addressing Jack, "there's a big opening in the wall of my yard that goes bang through into the yard of the old Pine Apple inn, where the stables is, and agin the hole on my side, I put the water-butt, and they does the same on their side; but a *hinfant* could move 'em away in a minute; and the grabs have never touched 'em, though they have been here on the hunting lay twenty times."

"What's least hidden, is often best hidden," said Jack.

"I believe you, sir. I do think if they was to come every day, and I was to live in the old crib until I was as old as Methusela, they would go away again, as green as they come."

"I don't doubt it for a moment."

Into the back parlor, where not the most savory odors arose from Mr. Stevens's cookery, he led the way, and opening the window, he sprung out of the room into a dirty yard. Claude and Jack followed him instantly, and there they met the young lady named Ann, who came back from disposing of the horses in the stable of the Pine Apple.

The inn yard in which Claude and Jack now found themselves, was tolerably extensive. A kind of gallery ran along one side of it, which could be reached by an old well-worn flight of wooden steps; and from that gallery opened a number of bed-rooms belonging to the inn. About the yard there was the usual amount of litter and confusion contingent upon a not very well ordered, but rather extensive range of stabling; but the two norses of our friends had completely disappeared.

In the course of a few moments a man came rather timidly down the stairs, from the gallery we have mentioned, and with a look of curiosity upon his face he approached our friends.

"Good gracious! is this possible? Duval," he cried "is it you?"

"It is, Figgins," said Claude, as he held out his hand. "Is your father well?"

"Quite. Quite. But if he were not he would be so glad to see you, that I think it would restore him. Had that riot I heard in Barbican, anything to do with you?"

"A little. They hunted me across Smithfield, that was all; and so I thought of the old crib and Stevens's shop, and in I popped."

"Right. Right. You could not possibly have done better. Who is your friend?"

"I will tell you that, or he will himself, I have no doubt, before we leave, but in the meantime you may be quite sure he is my friend."

"That is quite sufficient. Follow me, and I will take you to the old man, He would have come himself, but I must tell you he has the gout, and when he is at his best he is not now very good at getting up and down stairs."

"Our legs are young enough," said Claude, "to enable us to wait upon him. I long to see him, for I do not forget what a true friend he has been to me on more than one occasion."

Both Claude and Jack followed the young man up the old tottering staircase, and then having passed through several rooms, they at last reached one which was very comfortably furnished, and in which sat an old man, whose hair was perfectly white, and whose face was a sufficient evidence that something a little stronger than pump-water had been in the habit of trickling down his throat for the last fifty years.

"Who is it, Dick?" he cried. "Who is it?"

"Duval, father," said the young man.

"What, Claude?" cried the old man, rising from his chair quickly, and then sinking into it again with such a howl that both Claude and Jack started back in amazement.

"Don't be frightened," said Dick. "It's only the gout."

"Only the gout! You hideous horrid rascal," cried the old man. "Only the gout! I only wish I had anything handy here to throw at your rascally head for saying, only the gout; but you will have it some day yourself, and that's a comfort. Duval, I am really glad to see you."

"And I to see you," said Claude, as he shook the old man by the hand. "Will you forgive me for not coming oftener?"

"To be sure, I will. Business, my boy, is business, and you can't be always making calls. But who is this you have with you? Is it an old friend or a new one, Duval?"

"Look well at me," said Jack, as he placed himself in the light. "Look well at me, Mr. Figgins, and I think you will know me again."

"Again?" said the old man.

"Yes, you knew me well enough once."

The old man shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment or two, and looked in Jack's face. Then he suddenly said—

"It must be true, though I didn't believe it when they told it to me. It must be true after all. You are Sixteen-string Jack."

"I am."

"Then you were not hung after all?"

"Yes, I was; but brought to life again, all of which I will tell you, at length, before I leave; and now, old friend, give me leave to shake hands with you and to tell you how glad I am to see you once again, although you don't look so young as you did twenty years ago."

"No," said Figgins, "you are right enough there, Jack. I do not look so young as I did twenty years ago; but it seems at this moment to have knocked off one-half that time to hold your hand in mine once again. Why, I can—Murder!"

"Good God! what's the matter?"

"Oh," said Dick, "it's only the gout. Father forgot it again, and was going to get up. It's only the gout in his toe."

"Oh, you villain," cried the old man. "Duval can you lend me a pistol to shoot this insulting scoundrel with, or can you, Jack? Only the gout, indeed!"

"Never mind him," said Claude. "Let us sit down here quietly, and talk over old times a little."

"Ay, we will; and, Dick, my boy, go to number forty-two in the cellar, and get up a couple of bottles of the old madeira, my boy; and when you speak of the gout again, call it the gout; and not only the gout—Oh, don't I wish you had it for an hour or two."

"Thank you, father."

Dick, the old man's son, soon brought the two bottles of the old madeira; and notwithstanding the gout, he (the old man) continued during the next hour to drink his fair share of the wine.

During this time, too, Jack told the old man the whole of his truly wonderful story, which is fully recorded in "an early part of this book;" and then, when there was a proposition on the part of old Figgins for two more bottles of the old madeira, Claude negated it by saying—

"You know, old friend, that my avocations are not favorable to much repose; and, therefore, whenever I do find myself fairly housed for a few hours, I think it is throwing away my opportunities not to indulge myself with a nap."

"Certainly—certainly."

"Then, with your permission, as I mean to make my appearance in the Ken to-night, I will lie down for a few hours first, and, I dare say, Jack will be glad to do the same."

"I shall indeed," said Jack.

"And you really will then pass some time in the Ken?" said Figgins. "That will be glorious. I'll go, and at once—Murder! Oh, you rascal!"

Dick, why don't you put me in mind of the gout, you villain! But you never do. You never do!"

Right under the bar-parlor of the old Pine-apple Inn, and extending for a considerable distance back beneath the stable-yard, was a large vaulted room or hall. The flooring was composed of flat red tiles, laid down very nicely, and the walls were of plaster, with, here and there, a plank placed in it flat-wise for the purpose of keeping it up, as immediately behind the plaster was nothing but earth.

Along the ceiling of this large apartment hung at regular intervals six hoops of tin, made each of them to hold a dozen candles, so that when the whole were lit, the place had a tolerably brilliant effect. Right down the centre of the place was a range of tables, and, at least, a hundred seats, of various sorts and sizes, were upon the floor.

This was one of the most celebrated Boozing Kens in the city of London. It could only be reached by going through the bar-parlor, and then there were two men playing the part of sentinels, who had to be satisfied regarding the propriety of admitting any one before they were allowed to go on, so that it was next to impossible for any officer or spy to make his way into the place; and it was in such places that daring robberies were concocted—that assignations for burglaries and highway peculations was made; and, in fact, all the business of the London thieves were conducted at the Boozing Kens, of which there were in London about six, and all of them perfectly well known to the police.

To those who are unacquainted with the mode in which Police business was then carried on in London, it may appear rather extraordinary that such nurseries of crime were allowed to exist; but the thing was a regular system, and the officers went upon the idea, that if there were no thieves, there would be no need of officers; therefore, Boozing Kens, as nurseries for thieves, or Family Kens, as they were sometimes called, were no bad things in their way.

It was very seldom, indeed, that any of the regular officers intruded in such places, but they had, no doubt, their spies in most of them, so that when any gentleman was wanted particularly, they could dog him from one of the Kens, and pounce upon him without his being aware that he was watched from his bacchanalian orgies in the Family Ken.

It was about one hour after dark that Duval and Jack made their appearance in the bar-parlor, in order to go into the Ken, where there would be many, no doubt, that would know them both well, and where from all they would be sure to receive the welcome that their celebrity warranted.

Old Figgins had managed, by smothering up his gouty leg in many bandages, and then keeping it from the floor, by the aid of a long piece of list going round his foot, and then round his neck, to hobble, by the help of his son, down the short flight of twelve steps that led to the short passage at the end of which was the Family Ken.

A large blanket hung before the entrance, and it had hung long enough to have assumed a color more resembling the back of a chimney than a blanket, but it was liked better than a door would have been by the frequenters of the place. It never made any noise, and it always closed of itself, easily, silently, and closely. Its hinges and its lock were never out of order; and, moreover, it smothered noise much better than any door would have done, let it have been ever such a good one.

Already a sufficient number of persons was assembled to make a confused murmur of noises come upon the night air, even through the blanket entrance to the Ken. The two sentinels stepped respectfully aside, when they saw old Figgins.

"Getting better, Mr. F.?" said one.

"A little, Bill, a little."

"Oh, you will be all right again, soon," said the other. They say the gout is a very healthy thing to have, and shows a man is in a good condition."

"Do they? I should like to be out of condition, a little, then, so that I might give it the go-by. Open the curtain, these are friends of mine."

"Then they are of the right sort."

The blanket was pulled aside, and the roar of voices and the steam of tobacco smoke that came from the Ken were for the moment quite overpowering, and perhaps to Claude and to Jack, who were much used to the pure air of the open country, the loaded atmosphere of that place was much more offensive than to any inhabitant of the city of London.

Neither Claude nor Jack, though, let those about them see that they shrank in the least from the atmosphere of the Ken. It would not have been policy so to do.

But little notice was taken either of Duval or Jack on their first entrance into the Ken, but old Figgins, turning to his son, said—

"Now, Dick," and the young man, who was very powerful, at once lifted his father on the end of the table nearest to him. Upon this, he was seen by all in the Ken, consisting of about forty persons, and a loud shout arose, of—

"Figgs—Figgs? Old Figgs is on his legs."

"It's a lie," shouted Figgins. "I am only on one leg. I only wish you all had a touch of the gout, that's all."

"Thank you, Figgs."

"Stop a bit, that wasn't what I came to say to you all. Nothing at all like it. I came to announce 'Duval.'"

"Duval," cried all the company at once.

"Yes, Claude Duval, and Sixteen-string Jack."

"Stop—stop," said Jack. "Don't announce me, I am supposed to be dead, you know."

"Yes; but I am very happy to be able to assure everybody here that you are not. Claude Duval, my family kids, and Sixteen-string Jack. Hurrah!"

A wild shout burst from the lips of all present, and the candles in the tin hoops shook again with the concussion of the air in that strange place.

"Sixteen-string Jack, poor fellow, suffered at Tyburn," cried a loud voice, "and it ain't the thing for any new hand to pick up an old pal's name."

"Ain't it? Well I—"

"For the love of heaven, say no more," whispered Jack. "I do not wish to be known to be in the land of the living, save to the few that I call my particular friends. Let the subject drop, I pray you."

"Very well—as you please, Jack."

"You will much oblige me."

"It shall be so. Now, my family men, I leave Claude Duval with you, and hope you will have a pleasant evening."

Another shout rose from the throats of the strange and motley assemblage, and Duval, turning to Figgins, said—

"A dozen bowls of punch, as soon as convenient, old friend."

"And he has ordered a dozen bowls of punch," added Figgins, in a loud voice.

"If anything had been wanting—which in good honest truth, it was not—to add to the popularity of Duval, this would have fully supplied the deficiency. The shouting became quite prodigious; and it was not stilled until Claude raised his hand, and getting a brief silence, said—

"My friends, I beg of you not to attract undue attention to the Ken to-night. I have many enemies, and I do not want them to fancy that I am here. I know your good feelings towards me, and all I can do is for a few hours to take a glass with you and then be off."

"To the road?" cried a voice.

"Yes," added Claude; "to the road!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

Another cheer was given, and then all was comparatively still. Claude and Jack went up to the farther end of the Ken, and a chair being placed upon a table, Duval was made to occupy it, whether he felt inclined to do so

or not; and then, in the course of ten minutes, in came the steaming hot punch, which was welcomed by another shout of exultation by all present. Again Claude held out his hand, asking for silence, and the roar of voices again subsided in obedience to his wishes.

At this moment some ten or twelve new comers added to the boisterous hilarity of the scene, and the fun and frolic was at its height, when one suddenly cried—

“Bill Jinks is nabbed!”

There was a stillness for a moment or two, as though death had stopped the current of life-blood in the breast of every one present, and then a murmur of conversation arose, and another voice cried—

“Ned Soames has been shot, and left a blessed *widder* and eight babies!”

“Let’s have a collection, then,” cried another. “We can give a shilling a-piece now, and a promise of future favors, can’t we? Will you go round with the bag, Jerry?”

“That’s your sort,” said a tall man with a profusion of bright red hair. “I’ll go round and collect the bobs. Now for it. Here’s the bag. Anybody may put in what they please, but nothing short of a bob. That’s the ticket. I know the face of everybody here, so I shan’t make any mistake.”

This individual produced a coarse canvas bag, and he then went from one to another of the company collecting the subscriptions, and giving the bag a shake as he came to each one, and making some jocose remark about the means of the party, which generally had the effect of extracting more than the shilling from him.

Suddenly he stopped before a short stout man, profusely marked by the smallpox, and in a puzzled tone said—

“Who the deuce are you?”

“Oh, don’t you know me?” said the man. “I am called Ticklish Bob.”

“Are you?”

“Yes, to be sure. There’s a bull for the bag. Cut along.”

“And pray what are you when you are at home? A cracksman, or a toby-hunter, or a knight of the road, or what?”

“Anything in a small way. I’m a family man.”

“Hilloa! who knows this cove?” cried Jerry, raising himself up to his full height, and indicating the man with his thumb.

Everybody looked at him, but there was a general shaking of heads consequent upon the examination. It was quite clear that the man was not known, and it was equally clear—contingent upon that circumstance—that he was in a situation of some considerable personal peril.

“Oh, this is all stuff!” he cried. “Some of you must know me. Why, I’ve cracked a crib or two in my time. It’s too bad to pretend not to know an old pal.—It’s really too bad.”

Some half-dozen strong men got cautiously between the suspected person and the door, or rather the blanket that did duty for a door, and one cried out—

“If anybody does know him, let them say so. If they don’t, why, in course he’s a sneak.”

“Me a sneak!” cried the man. “Oh, that is too bad; but if you don’t like my company, I will be off at once. Gentlemen, I will go if that will be more pleasing to you. Only say the word, and of course I am off directly, gentlemen.”

“We isn’t gentlemen,” said Jerry, “but we is family coves. Don’t insult us by calling of us gentlemen, I begs; and as for going, old fellow, that’s a thing as you’ll do, when we knows something more of you. Does anybody know him?”

“No! no!” shouted the crowd of eager faces that crowded round the man, who now turned ghastly pale, and with a sickly smile upon his face, glanced around him, upon that throng of faces, in which he could not see one that bore to him a friendly expression.

"What have I done, pals," he said, "that I should be picked out to be made a butt of? How came I here, if I don't belong to the family? Come now, I'll stand another couple of bowls of punch. Only let us have harmony."

"That's just what we wants," said Jerry. "Lay hold of him, coves. Lay hold of him."

A couple of them seized the now trembling man, and Jerry striding up to him, said—

"Now, what have you got in your pockets, old chap. You say you are a cracksmen, and if you are, perhaps you have got some of your tools about you."

"No—no. I am on no lay to-night, and so I have nothing with me. All I have is this guinea, and I am quite willing to spend it, and make an end of this affair. It will get a couple of right good bowls of punch, won't it, Mr. Figgins?"

"I can't go for to take upon myself all for to say," said Figgins. "It all depends upon circumstances, you see, old fellow. We shall know more about it in a little time."

"Now," said Jerry, "I flatter myself that I can search a fellow as well as any officer in England. In course, when I talk of searching, none o' this here honourable Family Ken knows what I means, but if you looks you will all see."

A peal of laughter followed this joke of Jerry's, for to tell the truth, the honourable company were one and all admirably acquainted with the process of searching, very few of them having been exempt from that operation, at some time or another.

The unknown man now looked as though his last hour was come, but he did not make any opposition, for that he knew would be utterly and entirely useless. He only looked unutterable things.

"Let's see," added Jerry, as he proceeded with his search, and laid the various articles on the table, close at hand, amid roars of laughter from the whole Ken. "Let's see—a snuff-box, good—a handkerchief, one constable's staff, one pair of darbies, one pistol, one warrant. Humph, when I was quite a little boy, my father and mother forgot to teach me to read. Here, Bill, what does the warrant say?"

"How do you know it's a warrant, Jerry?"

"Why, one day, a gentleman in a red waistcoat showed me one, and it looked just like this here, and arter that he wished me to stay a month or two in a very large house, and arter that some coves said, 'Not Guilty,' one day, and out I toddled again, that's all I know about it. What does it say, Bill?"

"It directs all Justices, Headboroughs, Constables and others, to assist Mathew Mouldy to apprehend one Claude Duval!"

A shout of rage rose from the Ken, and the officer, for officer he really was, grew faint with terror.

"Let me go," he said. "It's of no use denying it now. I am an officer, and I came to look at Claude Duval, and to follow him and nab him if I could. I hid here in the daytime, under one of the tables, and only slipped out when the candles were lit, and now let me go. What good will it do you to do me any harm?"

"Mr. Mouldy," said Jerry, "your werry humble servant. I rather thinks as you is in for it now, and that you'll be blue mouldy afore anybody outside sees you again."

"You don't mean to murder me! You surely can't mean to murder me?"

"Oh, dear no; we will only—"

"Stop!" cried Claude. "I do not deny but that this is an affair that concerns you all; but still, you must confess that it more particularly concerns me."

"Anything but letting him go, Duval," said Jerry.

"Listen to me. He has come here for the purpose of having a good look at me, so that he might dog me when I leave, and take me. Let him have his look, and keep him here till I go; then, if he likes to come out with me and try his luck, I am quite willing."

"Knock him on the head here, at once," cried a voice.

"If you do," said Duval, "this is my last appearance in the Old Ken, and I leave it on the moment. Let him be here until I go; don't let him leave before me; that's all I ask of you, and then the danger is over."

"I give up the whole affair," cried the officer; "I give it all up. I swear to you, that I wouldn't touch Duval now if I saw him on the steps of Newgate. Spare my life, and I will give up the whole affair!"

"No, no!" cried twenty or thirty voices. Death to the spy! Death to the sneak!"

"It shall not be!" said Duval, in a voice of thunder.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE tone of voice in which Duval spoke was one that quite convinced all who heard him of the complete seriousness of his intention to protect the officer, and a feeling of great disappointment came over the family men in the Boozing Ken upon that account. A dead silence prevailed for several minutes.

"Listen to me, my friends, added Claude. "I should be the last man in the world to say anything or do anything contrary to your general wishes or intents; but it is beneath any of us to do anything to this man short of killing him, and that it would be base to do."

"Why base?"

"Because, my friends, we are nearly fifty to one."

The officer shrank as close to Claude as he could.

"What will you do with him then, captain?" said a voice.

"Let him come out with me, and if he plays the traitor I pledge myself to bring him back again."

"Good, good," cried several; "let it be so. The captain knows best. Let him have his own way in the matter."

"My friends," said Claude, "I sincerely thank you for this confidence in me. Be assured that what I do, I do for the general good; and if I saw occasion that this man should die, my hand would be the first to strike him as my voice would be the first to condemn him. But let us all steer clear of murder if we can. It looks like murder for so many to take the life of one."

"So it does—so it does. Claude Duval for ever! Hurrah!"

"You are safe for the present," said Claude to the officer; "beware how you tamper with that safety. I may not be again able to stand between you and those who feel strongly concerning you."

"Thank you," said the officer. "Can you tell me if that clock there, on the wall, is right or not?"

"I think it is."

The clock, which for the special convenience of the frequenters of the Ken had been put up on one of the walls, at this moment began to strike twelve, and naturally enough all eyes were directed to it. When it had finished striking the officer suddenly scrambled on to the table that was the nearest to him, and cried out—

"As you have been so generous as to spare my life all of you, I should like to say a few words, if it is only to let you know how truly grateful I am for the favor."

"Hold your row," said Joe.

"Get down," shouted a dozen voices. "We don't want any gammon."

A great many, however, seemed to wish to hear what the officer could possibly have to say, and shouted to him, go on; and amid the tumult, Claude said to him—

"Why, you must be the next thing to an idiot to court so much attention towards you. Have you as many lives as a cat?"

"Perhaps I have," he said.

"Well, the consequences of your own folly be upon your own head. I wash my hands of it."

"Gentlemen," cried the officer; "gentlemen, I—"

"Call us prigs," shouted a voice. "We ain't no gentlemen here."

"I will call you anything you like, if you will only permit me to say how grateful I am to you all; and, as a proof of it, I here produce a pistol, which you missed in your search of me. It is loaded; and to show you the entire confidence I have in your merciful intentions, I here deprive myself of it, my only defence, by discharging it against the wall."

To the surprise of everybody there, who saw no occasion for such an exhibition of confidence, the officer discharged his pistol against the earthen wall of the Boozing Ken.

There was a pause of a few moments duration; for, somehow, there was a general feeling, that this shot was but the commencement of something in which they might all be more or less interested; and then, the landlord's son rushed into the Ken, crying—

"Douse the glims! The grabs are all round the house. Douse the glims, and cut it!"

"Bravo!" cried the officer, and he made a spring at the throat of Claude. It was a daring act; but Claude caught him round the neck with his open right hand, and, in a moment, clasped his throat, as though it had been in a vice. Claude saw the officer's face turning blue, and then every light in the place was extinguished.

The darkness in the Ken was most profound, and the Babel of voices was most prodigious. The members of the "family" were availing themselves of all their knowledge of the localities of the place, to make their escape, and the riot was terrific.

It appeared that at the sound of the officer's pistol, which was an agreed upon signal between him and a strong force of officers on the outside, in case anything should go wrong in his original arrangement, they were to storm the place with the hope of capturing Claude Duval by a rush.

That rush was now being made, and everything in the public-house was being upset by some fifteen well-armed officers, in their attempt to reach the Boozing Ken, where they only cared to make one prisoner; but that one was Claude, and in their estimation, worth all the rest.

Duval still held the officer by the throat, until he felt quite sure that he was no longer in the land of the living; and then he flung him a considerable distance from him.

Suddenly, Claude felt his arm clutched, and the voice of the son of the landlord sounding in his ear, saying—

"Follow me."

"Anywhere you like," said Claude.

"Hush!"

At this moment, as Claude followed wherever the young man chose to lead him, he heard the doors above in the house—doors that had been closed to keep back the officers, being broken open, with a crashing sound.

"Our friends are in earnest," whispered the young man. "Take hold of my coat, and keep as close to me as you can. We will baffle them yet, I think."

"I hope so."

Claude had not the least idea of where he was being led to; all he was at all aware of was, that the places through which he passed had a very peculiar earthy smell, as though damp and mildew had for long marked them as their own. But he knew that he could well, and truly, keep implicitly to his guide; and he felt a confidence, that not ten times the reward that was offered for him would induce either the old publican, or his son, to betray him.

"Don't speak," whispered the young man, "until I tell you that we are effectually out of all possible earshot of our foes. Then say what you like."

Claude upon this was profoundly silent, and continued to follow his guide wherever it might please him to go.

The gloomy, earthy smell of the passages continued, and at length the publican's son said—

"All's right, I think, now. You are safe, Duval."

"And I have to thank you. Where are we?"

"We are in the cellar of a house three doors off from our own; of course, we must be tolerably careful not to create any alarm, although, by this time, the inhabitants of the house are, of course, in bed."

"Then, you don't know the people?"

"Oh, no—only by sight and name. They have not the remotest idea that their cellarage is one-half so extensive as it is, nor that there is a narrow communication between one dark corner of it and the Ken. The fact is, this house once belonged to a man called Slashing Tim, who suffered at Tyburn."

"I have heard of him."

"Well, he and my father were old pals, and they made the communication between the cellars here and the Ken themselves; but that was long ago, in the old man's young days."

"So I should think. But how still everything is."

"Yes, I expect the officers have met with a little disappointment. They have, no doubt, by this time found their way, with lights, into the Ken, and are rather astonished not to see you. They will not interfere with any one else; for, luckily, the only two or three they would have pounced upon, are not here to-night."

"In truth, I am glad of it; for it would have been my presence alone that would have brought the danger upon them; and now, the sooner I get off and away, and on the road, the better I shall be pleased. There is one thing, however, that gives me uneasiness."

"What is that?"

"My horse. I expect it is tolerably well known to some of the officers; and if they should chance to hunt your stables through, and find him there, they will guess that I am not far off."

"Make yourself quite easy about that, Claude. Has your horse three white feet and a white star on his forehead?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Yes, Claude, he has, and if you were to see him now in our stables, you would find all those distinctive marks upon him."

"Ah, I understand you. You have been so good as to whiten him a little to prevent prying eyes from saying—'That is Duval's horse.'"

"Exactly so; and now will you exercise your patience a little, and stay where you are, while I go and see what is going on at the bar; I will not be away one moment longer than may be absolutely necessary."

"A thousand thanks. Don't hurry on my account."

Claude, in another moment, found himself alone in the cellars, and so profoundly dark were they, that he literally could not see his hand before his face, and it was only by cautiously feeling all round him, that he satisfied himself he was not quite close to some wall, against which he might hurt himself, if he moved a step.

Suddenly a faint starlike light broke the intense darkness of the cellar, and from quite another direction to that in which the son of the old publican had disappeared there came a figure which filled Claude for the moment with astonishment.

A very little, old, decrepit man, attired in a miserable dressing-gown and carrying a candle-end stuck in a piece of cleft stick came tottering into the cellar. He was muttering to himself as he came, and Claude could just catch the words—

"Ay, ay, it all helps. It all helps. Who knows but I may get old some day?—I ain't old now. What is seventy-seven? Nothing—nothing, and it all helps—Only another guinea, but it is another, that's a comfort. It is another—Ay, ay—it all helps."

The old man repaired direct to a particular portion of the cellar-floor, and then with a knife, which he took from his pocket, he began digging, until, at only a couple of inches or so from the surface, he dug up a small iron box. This he took up and held in his trembling hands with quite a religious veneration.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

CLAUDE was quite astonished at the conduct of the old man, but when he saw him open the little iron box, and by the light of his candle-end, gloat over the sight of some gold that was in it, he fully comprehended that he was one of those miserable beings who submit to a hundred privations to accumulate gold, lest by some freak of fortune, they should be compelled to endure two or three.

"All safe—all safe," muttered the old miser. "Here is my money and no human eye looks upon it but myself. Yes, all is very safe indeed, here."

How little he suspected that one of the most celebrated highwaymen of the age was within twelve paces of him!

"Yes, yes," he continued, "all's safe, and here goes the other to add to the store. Ah, my glittering beauties!"

Claude felt some one touch him lightly on the arm, and upon turning, he found it was the landlord's son. They both looked on with no small amount of amazement at the miser's proceedings.

"It would almost be a charity," whispered the son, "to take his gold from him."

"It would kill him. You had better take his life."

"I will take neither; but yet a knowledge of this secret of the old man may be useful some day."

"Hush! he is listening."

The old miser thought evidently that he had heard something, for as he knelt upon the cellar-floor, he put himself into a listening attitude; but as both Claude and the landlord's son remained now profoundly quiet, he thought he was deceived.

"It is nothing," he said. "Nothing; or, if anything, only some rat. Ha! I dread. Ha!—ha! All is safe."

After this the old man covered up his little iron box of gold, and having patted down the earth above it, he took up the little notched stick, in the cleft of which the candle-end was nearly expiring, and hobbled from the cellars.

"All is right in the Ken," said the young man to Claude.

"What, have the officers left?"

"They have; and what is more, they have left without noticing the dead body of their comrade, which had rolled under one of the old tables and lay there quite hidden."

"He is dead then?"

"Yes. You, I suppose, managed that for him, after all."

"I fancy I did; and after the trouble I had taken to save him, it was perhaps more my business to do so than any one's else in the whole Ken. I am sorry he brought such a fate upon himself, but he amply deserved it. It was the fortune of war."

"It was. Follow me, Claude, and you shall soon see the night sky again."

"It will be very welcome. I assure you that if I am many hours without breathing the open air, I get unhappy; and the air that is loaded with the

damp smell of vegetation, amid trees and flowers, is the most welcome of all to my senses."

The young man led the way from the cellars of the house into a small area, and then forcing a door, that had upon it a very flimsy bolt indeed, they found themselves fairly in the house. They then lit a dark lantern, and saw that it was a kitchen into which they had made their way.

After this, although the kitchen-door was locked, the difficulty of getting to the passage and street doors was not by any means great to persons so accustomed to overcome that class of obstacles as Claude and his friend were. The street-door being made fast upon the inside, of course, opposed no obstacle whatever to their progress, and Claude, with his friend, soon stood in the open street.

"My horse!" said Claude. "Oh, for my horse!"

"It is here," said the young man.

As he spoke, a lad, leading Claude's horse, made his appearance; and the transformation created by the white marks that had been made upon the animal, was so complete, that even Duval himself, with all his intimate knowledge of the animal, would have hesitated to pronounce him his.

"If I were as well disguised," said Claude, "I should think nothing of calling at Newgate or at Bow Street to ask them what the time of day was. Will it come off?"

"It is only whitening and gum."

"Good. I will let it be until I get to the country. But where is Jack?"

"Here," said Jack, stepping up. "I am all right, Claude; for Heaven's sake, let us be off. I have a horrid tale to tell you of that poor devil of an officer as we go along."

Jack shuddered as he spoke; and then he mounted his horse, which he himself had, and Claude mounted his; but before they trotted off, Claude shook hands with the landlord's son, saying—

"Remember me to your father, kindly."

"I will; but the old man has a dismal presentiment upon his mind that he will never see you again in this world, Claude Duval."

"Has he? I will soon knock that out of his head. Wait for me a moment, Jack."

"What would you do?"

"Nothing particular, I will be back in a moment; I am only going to disprove my old friend's presentiment, that he will not see me again in this world, that's all; and if all the officers in London were in the way I would shake hands with him yet, and wish him good night, or rather early morning."

Despite the fears of Jack, that he would be running into the greatest danger by so acting, Claude must needs call upon the old gouty publican; and springing from his horse at the door of the house, he strode in, anxious to conclude the interview as shortly as possible.

"This way," said the son. "Father is this way."

"All's right," said Claude, as he ran up stairs after him; and then in another moment, he was shaking hands with the old man, and saying—"So you thought you would see me no more, did you old friend? but here I am after all."

"Oh, why did you venture?"

"To see you."

"But it is madness. I am certain as that I live that the officers are hiding in the house even now, and if they see you, or if they suspect that you are here, you are lost—lost!"

"I'm off in a moment. We are not all lost that are in danger. Good-by, old friend. You and I will meet again, depend upon it."

"No—no, I have a presentiment that we shall not."

"And I," said Claude, "have a presentiment the other way; so I am resolved that mine shall come true. Farewell."

Claude had only taken two steps towards the door, when it was slammed shut violently from without, and locked, and then a loud voice cried—

“I have him! I have him! He is in this room! Come on! I have him! Here! Here! I have him at last! This way, comrades, I have locked the door!”

“Have you really?” said Claude; but you forgot the window.”

The window was a French casement, and opened on a low small balcony—Claude was on that balcony in a moment, and Jack saw him.

“My horse,” said Claude.

“Yes, yes,” cried Jack. He understood fully what Claude meant, which was, that the horse should be brought under the balcony to facilitate his descent. Jack placed the obedient steed in the required position, and in an instant Claude descended on to the saddle.

“All’s right,” he cried.

“Thank the fates, it is,” cried Jack; “and now, let us be off out of London, Claude; for the risks of the last few hours have made me sick at heart. Off—off—”

“In a moment, Jack. Now for it.”

In an other instant, Claude would have been off, and would soon have distanced all pursuit; but suddenly, a man appeared at the door of the public-house with a thick holster pistol in his hand; and, levelling it at Claude, he cried, as he fired it—

“Take that! I don’t miss often!”

The bullet struck Claude upon the left arm, producing a strange stunning sensation, but, at the time, nothing more, and in an instant Claude drew one of his pistols from the side of the saddle, and firing it at the man, cried—

“I never miss, where I mean to hit!”

With a yell, like the last cry of some wild animal, the officer fell back into the passage of the public-house.

“That’s done,” said Claude. “Now, Jack, for a trot.”

They clapped spurs to their horses, and went at a rapid pace into Finsbury Square; and then, turning their horses’ heads westwards, off they went at a gallop that soon left all chance of pursuit far behind them. The horses were perfectly fresh, and had been well looked to at the public-house, so that they did not flag in their pace in the least. The long straggling thoroughfare of the New Road was passed; nor did Claude materially slacken his pace until he found himself in the green lanes, and among the meadows, which now form the site of Cambridge and Oxford Terraces.

All danger from any pursuers had long since been passed, and it was with a face full of satisfaction that Claude now once again, after so many perils, found himself once more in the open air; and as the light of the early morning shone upon the tall trees in the hedgerows, and the wild birds began to sing their early songs, he felt that glow of the imagination which all true lovers of nature feel when in the midst of her glorious and beautiful works.

“I breathe again, Jack,” he said.

“And, I too,” replied Jack. “London is something to me very like a large prison, Claude.”

“It can be compared to nothing else, Jack; for amid its wilderness of bricks and mortar, are you not shut out from all that is bright and beautiful in nature? How those who can fly to country sights, and country sounds, voluntarily submit themselves to the tiresome artificialities of city life, is to me inconceivable.”

“And to me. Hark at that?”

A thrush was sitting upon a blackthorn bush not far from them, and was pouring out a gush of melody.

“Yes, that is better music than any over-dressed crowd ever heard in the heated atmosphere of a concert-room.”

“It is, indeed; but where do you think of going to, Claude, now? We are rather too near town to be quite safe.”

"We shall never be quite safe, Jack. But I intend to keep on the western road a little while, and do what business I can. I look upon the route from Tyburn Pike to Guildford as my manor, and I take toll of who I can. I am not over rich, and you must recollect that now I have all the responsibilities of a married man upon me. Ha! Who comes here? Don't you hear the sound of horse's feet, Jack?"

"I do."

They both rode a little on one side, and in the course of a few minutes a couple of mounted men came up. One of them was a thick-headed bully of a fellow, but the other had all the primness and neatness of a gentleman in his clothing, although a certain air of vulgar religious fashion about his apparel very much detracted from his general aspect. Upon observing Claude and Jack, he rode up to them, and said in a canting nasal sort of tone—

"My friends, have you been long hereabouts?"

"No," said Claude, "not above a couple of hours."

"I do not wish to offend you, but I have had information that the notorious Claude Duval will be in this neighbourhood shortly, and if you have no objection to a fifty-pound-note, and will assist me to capture him, you shall have it."

"I have not the least objection to the note, but is not this notorious Claude Duval—I suppose it is the highwayman you mean?—a very desperate fellow?"

"He is, but here are four of us, and although he has a companion with him, I think we may capture him."

"How came you to know he would be hereabouts?"

"Why if you must know, it was Dick Turpin told me."

"Dick Turpin?"

"Yes. He, you know—or you may have heard—is no better than he should be, and he gave me the information. How he got it I don't pretend to know."

"And pray where is Dick Turpin?"

"On the road here somewhere. I and my man took him prisoner; but upon his giving us the information regarding Claude Duval, we let him go, for, you see, no reward is offered for him."

"Quite a sufficient reason, I grant, quite sufficient. I should like to see this Dick Turpin, though; but as it is, I consent of course to your terms, and only hope you have the money with you."

"Oh, yes, I have it, and as soon as Claude Duval is taken and I have a good hold of him, you shall have it, you may depend. This is your servant, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is, and he will assist us very much. Of course, you will give him something likewise?"

"I don't mind a ten-pound-note if we are successful; but mind you, I give nothing unless I have fairly hold of Claude Duval. Then the money is due, and you shall have it on the instant, for if he gets away after I have got a grip of him, I will give him leave, and say that he is the better man."

As he spoke, he stretched out a large bony hand, which certainly might, if its owner had courage as well as strength, be of some service in holding any one tolerably tight.

"Well," said Claude, "I have not a very long time to spare, and I must be getting on a little, so let us walk our horses westward. If we meet him, well and good. "If we don't, of course it can't be helped; but somehow, it comes across me that we shall."

"So it does me, my friend. I dream't it last night, and my dreams generally come true."

"So do mine. Do you know I dream't that I met an idiot, who handed me a fifty-pound-note for nothing at all."

"And idiot, sir?"

"Yes, to be sure, and you are the man. Jack—Jack."



Claude and Jack making their Escape from the Glover's

"Yes. I am here."

"Look to that fellow behind, and blow his brains out at once, if he stirs an inch. Now, my friend, your dream has come true, for I am Claude Duval; and my dream will come true, for you will hand me the fifty-pound-note; so you see what wonderful and providential things dreams are, at times."

The man glared at Claude, as though he had seen a spectre, and he repeated the words "Claude Duval!" as though they had only come to him floating on the air, and he had not the least idea in the world as to who had given utterance to them. Then, suddenly, in a screaming voice, he called out—

"Jenkins, catch the other one, I've got this!"

The great, bony hand was stretched out, and Claude's collar was fastened upon with no despicable grasp.

"You would be wise," said Claude, "to take your hand away."

"Catch the other one, Jenkins! Catch the other one!"

"I have got him," growled Jenkins.

"Call out murder, Jenkins! Call out murder, Jenkins!"

"Murder," said Jenkins, in one of the quietest tones in the world; then Claude darted forward his right hand, and caught the sanctified-looking person by the throat, with a grasp that seemed to be something superhuman.

"Let's see," he said, "who will hold on longest."

The face of the would-be captor of the highwayman grew red, and he shouted—"Jenkins—Jenk—Jen—Je——"

Claude's fingers compressed his throat too closely to enable him to speak, and the hold he had taken of Claude's collar gradually relaxed, and finally fell off altogether.

"Fool!" cried Duval, as he gave him a shake, and then letting go his throat, he slid off his horse to the ground. "Jack, where are you? Is it true that you are a prisoner?"

"Not exactly," said Jack. "This fellow is as quiet as a lamb. I never met with a more favourably-inclined man."

"Who are you?" said Claude riding up to the bullet-headed looking man, who was quietly seated on his horse, looking at Jack, who had levelled a pistol at his head. "Who are you, fellow?"

"Jok Jenkins; I always takes things easy. You are the biggest, so I lets you have your way. I always gives in to the strongest and biggest, I does. If I was to come across some little boy, I would whack him; but otherwise, I takes things easy."

"Why, you are quite a philosopher, Jenkins."

"Anything you like, sir."

"Well, I will trouble you to dismount, and take your master, there, and throw him into yon ditch with the duck-weed upon it."

"Certainly, sir; oh, certainly. Take it easy. Of course, sir. Anything you like; you are a great deal the biggest, sir, as you will see when I get down. Then don't you see, I'm bound to do just what you like, you see, in an easy way, sir. Throw master in the ditch? Oh, certainly."

"Well," said Claude, "you certainly are the drollest fellow ever I came near. Before our friend here goes into the ditch, Jack, just lighten his pockets of anything that would not benefit by a damping."

Jack rifled the half-insensible man's pockets, in a few minutes. He was slowly recovering from the insensibility that had been induced by the squeeze Claude had given his neck; and while Jack was rifling his pockets, he glared at him with a stupid half-stunned sort of look, not knowing very well what was going on. Claude started both the horses, and they went off at a good canter down the green lane.

"Now," said Claude to Jenkins, "you can do what I told you."

"Yes, sir."

He lifted his master from the ground, easily enough, for Jenkins had a good quantity of brutal strength about him.

"Help, help!" cried the sanctified-looking personage. "Help, murder, what are you about, Jenkins?"

"Take it easy. They are both bigger than we are, master. Take it easy; anything for a quiet life, you know. I am only going to throw you in the ditch. That's all, master. Take things easy."

"In the ditch? Murder—murder!"

"I must. Look at him. Big he is; and so it is quite right, and it must be done. It's of no use your kicking, master; there you go."

"Splash! The sanctified-looking man was struggling in the ditch among the duck-weed, and it was well for him that he had recovered so far as he had, or he would inevitably have been drowned, for all Jenkins would have troubled himself in the matter.

"Ah?" said Jenkins, as he saw his master gradually struggling up the bank. Ah, he don't look nice, but it had to be done. We must in this world give way to the biggest."

"Murder!" screamed the unfortunate wretch who had made in his mind so sure of capturing Claude. "Murder, I am smothered."

The duck-weed had stuck to him in the most eccentric manner, so that he seemed as though, by the touch of an enchanter's wand, he had been changed to green, including his face and hands.

"Is he to be pushed in again, sir?" said Jenkins to Claude.

"No," replied Claude, as he mounted, "I think he has had enough for this once; and I leave you now, Mr. Jenkins, with the most profound admiration for your philosophy."

CHAPTER LXXV.

"Come on, Jack," said Claude.

Off they both went at a sharp trot from the scene of the late encounter. There was not the least likelihood of either Jenkins or his master following them, seeing that those two worthies were now on foot, but still Claude and Jack thought it best to place as speedily as they could a few miles between them and their late adversaries. At length, with an explosion of laughter, which he could no longer resist, Claude drew up, and turned round to Jack.

"Did you ever, Jack," he cried, "in all your life and experience, meet with such a fellow as that Jenkins?"

"Never," said Jack. "He is the most extraordinary original I ever encountered. I wonder if that odd manner is natural to him, or only assumed as a result of general feeling of disgust at large."

"Oh, it is natural, Jack."

"Can you really think so? It sounded to me like the most exquisite piece of grave irony that I had heard for a very long time indeed; bid extremes meet, Claude, and we can only say that our friend, Jenkins, is either a great fool or a great philosopher. When I held my pistol to his head, and told him to stir upon the risk of death, he replied, 'Just so,' and from that moment did not make the smallest effort to take any advantage of me."

"He is, in truth, an oddity."

"Most surely. But look at the pocket-book, Claude, that I took from his master. I have not had time to examine it. I hope there will be something in it to make it worth the trouble of taking."

Jack handed the pocket-book to Claude, who opened it with all due gravity. The first thing he took out of it was a very carefully folded, but terribly worn, silk nightcap; the second thing was the unpaid bill of some laundress, amounting to two shillings and four pence; and that was all.

Claude looked at Jack, and Jack looked at Claude, and then the latter again burst out into an uproarious fit of laughter, while Jack pulled rather a long face, and quietly said—

"We are done."

"Yes, Jack, we are done; and upon my word this, to me, has been a most amusing adventure. I don't think the poor devil had one farthing in the world, and the offer of the fifty-pound-note to me for my own apprehension was only a magnificent piece of bombast to secure some efficient assistance. There is only one thing that I do not comprehend in the whole affair, and that, to tell the truth, does disturb me very much."

"And that," said Jack, "I can guess, is the use that has been made of the name of Dick Turpin."

"True—most true. I would stake my life upon the good faith of Dick; but it does puzzle me to find that, for the second time, information of my whereabouts is by two distinct people attributed to him."

"But you don't believe it, Claude?"

"No, upon my life, I do not, and until I have it from the lips of Dick himself I will not believe it. But come on, Jack. We are most magnificently done as regards the pocket-book, and the poor devil who owned it is very appropriately punished. Let us push on over Wormholt Scrubs here, and who knows but we may meet with better fortune?"

"Don't you think it would be advisable to change your costume, Claude?"

"Why, hardly yet, Jack. I flatter myself that in this present dress I look very respectable, and like some gentleman of independent means, while I must confess your getting up as a first-class groom is exquisite. I do not think that we have any enemies close upon our track who know of this disguise, and to fresh foes it will carry us through anything."

"There is reason in that, Claude; so let us, as you say, push on over the Scrubs."

Wormholt Scrubs was then a very much wilder and more country-looking neglected spot than it is now that a slashing railway passes through the middle of it; and when Claude and Jack came upon it, they could, in the wide expanse before them, see no sign of any human being save themselves. They took a direct route across the Scrubs in the direction of Hounslow, where upon a more mature consideration Claude intended to dine.

About three hundred yards to the left there was a small clump of fir trees, and it was about the only shelter for the space of a mile or more; and just as they passed this little clump of trees, there issued out from it a horseman, attired in a faded sky-blue coat with tarnished silver lace upon it. Huge jack-boots were upon his feet, and he wore likewise a slouching hat with a very large buckle. His horse was rather a smart-looking animal enough, and take him for all in all, he looked like some unattached drunken subaltern officer in the army, who upon slender means contrived to cut a sorry dash among a not very creditable class of society. Such characters—now happily extinct, for an officer is forced to be a gentleman—were very frequent even fifty years ago.

He came prancing on, with a devil-may-care sort of look, and as Claude had passed on, he encountered Jack, to whom he said, in an authoritative voice—

"Who is your master, sirrah?"

"A gentleman," said Jack.

"But his name and calling, sirrah? Answer me."

"He is just before you," said Jack; "and you had much better ask him yourself. Information is always best from the highest source. Here he is."

"B—— Sir, I'll remember your insolence. Hang it, sir, how dare you speak to me in this way?"

Hearing the altercation, Claude turned his horse's head, and trotted back.

"What is all this about?" he said. "Is the gentleman out of his mind? or has he lost his way on the Scrubs?"

"No, sir," said the fellow, "this gentleman is neither mad, nor has he lost his way upon the Scrubs. Confound my blood, sir, I am a gentleman, and in want of a little ready cash; do you understand that, sir?—Curse everybody—eh, sir?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I understand it, as well as your ridiculous and stupidly profane oaths will permit me."

"Oh, oh, you belong to the church, do you? Well, well, my fine dressed gentleman, we will borrow a few guineas from you. In a word—your money or your life!"

"What! Are you really, then, a highwayman?" said Claude.

"Call me what you like; but stand and deliver!"

The fellow produced a pistol nearly as large as a small carbine, which he levelled at the head of Claude, who, however, took no more notice of it than if it had been a bit of a stick; but turning to Jack, he said—

"Here is a highwayman, if you never saw one before. He is quite a

curiosity in his way. Let's ride round him and have a good look at him. How often I have wished to meet with a real live, bragging, bouncing, cowardly rascal, such as this.

As Claude spoke he walked his horse slowly round the fellow, who, with a growing fear upon his face, kept turning and facing him, still keeping the immense pistol presented at his head all the while.

"Come; come," he said, "these tricks won't do for me."

"Nor for me," said Claude; "so go your way, and I will go mine. I have seen quite enough of you, my friend."

"But I have not seen enough of you, my friend; and so, I say again, your money or your life! I am one too accustomed to say, 'Stand and deliver!' to be trifled with."

"Do you mean seriously to say that you want my money?"

"Ay, brother; and your watch and jewelry too. Ha!—ha!"

"If you will stand on your head for five minutes I will give you a shilling, but not otherwise, my fine fellow."

"Then you and your servant may as well say your prayers, for your two lives are not worth a minute's purchase. Perhaps, when I tell you who I am, you will come to a different conclusion. I am Dick Turpin!"

A sudden light broke over Claude's countenance. Here then, at once, was the mystery unravelled. This fellow was personating Dick Turpin in the neighborhood; and not a doubt remained in the bosom of Claude but that it was from this man that the gentleman in the ditch had obtained his information.

"Dick Turpin?" said Claude.

"Yes. You have heard of me?"

"Oh, surely. Really, this is one of the pleasantest adventures that I have met with for a very long while, indeed. I am Claude Duval!"

The fellow reeled again in his saddle, and the gigantic pistol fell from his palsied fingers to the ground. Claude sprung upon him, and clutched his arm.

"Stir a step, and you are a dead man. I will blow your brains out with as little compunction of conscience as I would those of a mad dog.

"Oh, spare me! I—am—only a poor fellow!"

"I know it; and a pitiful fellow are you into the bargain, you vagabond. Tell me this moment why you assumed the name of one who is as different from you as Hercules is to a sick child? Speak, dolt! Jack, keep an eye on him. Pitch him off his horse, or he will give us a race after him yet."

Jack charged against the fellow, but he anticipated the shock by slipping off his horse on to the ground, and leaving the animal quietly to crop the scanty herbage on the common.

"Spare my life," he moaned, "and ask me what you like. I will tell you everything. Only spare my life!"

"Why did you assume the name of Turpin?"

"Because—I—found—that it frightened people, and so they let me rob them when otherwise they wouldn't."

"How comes it that you have given information concerning me to several people?"

"I—only—slightly—mentioned——"

"Come—come; let us have no prevarication. You gave certain information concerning my movements: why did you do so?"

"I will tell the truth. I was afraid of meeting you about this neighborhood, and thought it would be a good thing to frighten you away to some other road—that was all."

"But your information—how did you procure it, for it has been strangely correct?"

"There is a girl named Lucy—you knew her once?"

"Ah!"

"Yes; she was your girl once, you know, Claude Duval, and when you

cast her off, you thought she came by her death; but she didn't, and she is now with me; but she don't, and she won't forget you; and she says she will never rest until she sees you hung. She dogs you as much as she can, and when she knows anything she sets the officers after you. I warn you to beware of her, Claude Duval, for the passion of a jealous woman knows no bounds. This that I tell you you may rely upon. It is the whole truth." (For this episode of Lucy in Claude's life see an early portion of this volume.)

"By Heaven," said Claude, "it must be so: It has the aspect of truth about it. Tell me—what does she know of me?"

"She knows, she says, that you are married, though I tell her that it is not very likely, because——" (Claude made an impatient gesture.) "Well, she says you are married, and I believe, if she could get at your wife, she would take her life."

Claude staggered a little.

"Do you hear that, Jack?" he said in a whisper.

"I do, Claude; and a bitter thing it is to hear."

"Very—very, Jack. What can I do?"

"Above all things, Claude, do not let the man see that you are so keenly touched by what he has told you."

"But you believe it, Jack?"

"I do. There is, I think, something about truth that carries conviction with it. I do not think he has deceived. In his fear he has spoken out the exact truth, Claude, and it is well that you know it."

"And yet I was happy in knowing it not. But no matter—no matter. He has, by truth-telling, disarmed me of all resentment against him now. I will speak to him again."

Claude turned away from his brief conference with Jack, and again addressed the man.

"My friend, I believe that which you have told me; and because I do believe it, I hold no enmity against you for what has passed. I advise you, for the future, not to take the name of Turpin, for he is a man of rather sudden and fierce temper, and should he encounter you, and know that you have played him such a trick, I would not give much for your life. So much I say to you in the way of advice."

"I thank you, Duval. I will no more personate Turpin. I am very much obliged to you. I was not always the disreputable devil that I am now."

"I don't think you were. Your language has a smack in it of something better."

"You are right. There was a time when—But, no matter. I am what I am, and to think even of the past, is like planting daggers in my heart. I have no friend in all the world now."

"You may make one in me if you like."

"May I indeed? Do you really mean it?"

"From my soul I do."

A change came over the face of the man, and he was evidently too much affected for some few moments to speak. Then he held out his hand, and in choking accents, he said—

"Will you take it?"

"Freely," said Claude, as he clasped it in his own. "Most freely. And now that we understand each other, tell me how I can serve you?"

"No way at present, Duval; but I can, I hope, serve you by keeping such a watch upon Lucy, that she shall have no opportunity of doing any harm to one whom I can easily imagine you value before all the world. That I think I can do for you, Claude Duval; and this, so help me Heaven, I will do for you."

CHAPTER LXXVI.

CLAUDE looked very serious for a few moments, and then he said—

“I have that degree of faith in what a madly jealous woman may do, that I shall not be easy until I see Lucy myself and speak to her.”

“That you can do.”

“Tell me, then, where I may be sure to find her.”

“I will so describe the place to you that you cannot miss it. There is upon Hounslow Heath a pond, and near to it an old barn, with the roof blown off,”

“I know it.”

“Well, a few paces from that barn there is a cottage with a very small patch of garden-ground reclaimed from the heath, and there you will find her. But I would like to know when you purpose coming, for I would take care she shall be at home to receive you.”

“I beg you,” said Claude, “not to give her the slightest hint of my coming, as that would spoil all.”

“Depend upon me, I will not.”

“Then to-night, during the hour between twelve and one, expect me. If I get the girl’s promise to rid herself of her wild resolve, I shall be satisfied, for I do not think she would break such a promise made to me.”

“I am afraid, Duval, you do not know her as well as I do. While she thought herself yours, no doubt her behaviour to you was gentle enough; but now she is a very devil incarnate.”

“Well—well, I will see her, and try what kind words will do, and if they will not, my duty to others calls upon me to adopt some course that will protect her, who is best of all entitled to my protection.”

Duval and Jack very shortly then took leave of their new friend; and when they were alone again, Jack said, with much earnestness of manner—

“Take care of yourself, Claude, when you visit that girl, for at the sight of you in the bitterness of her rage she may try to do you a mischief.”

“I will be careful, Jack. I must confess that her threats against Cicely fill me with uneasiness. But I will come to some conclusions upon that matter to-night. Ah, whom have we here now?”

Two persons on horseback, a lady and a gentleman, approached. The lady was young and handsome, but the gentleman in every part, and even in the manner in which he sat on his horse and held the bridle, showed the coxcomb. As he approached Claude and Jack, he put an eye-glass to his eye, where, by a curious contraction of the muscles, he held it fast, and glared at them both for a moment or two in silence.

Jack was, or this exquisite fancied that he was, in his way slightly, so he drawled out—

“Fellow, get out of the world, will you! Don’t answer me—I can’t hold any conversation with the lower classes. I think they ought all to be put out of the world. Out of the way, fellow.”

“Did you address me?” said Jack.

“Ah, he speaks. Out of the way, fellow, and don’t let me hear your horrid low class voice.”

“Don’t be angry, Jack,” said Claude, laughing as he saw the colour mounting to Jack’s cheek. “Don’t be angry; he is only a curiosity. You should never be annoyed at any animal following its vocation, and its natural impulses, Jack. Men are men, apes are apes, as you see by the specimen before you.”

“Good God,” cried the exquisite. “I shall have to finish this fellow. Stand aside, my dear Helen, while I send him into another world.”

With this the conceited personage drew a remarkably slender sword, and made a flourish with it in the air no doubt fully expecting that Jack would

start back in alarm; but when he found that such was not the case, but that with his hand raised, Jack watched him steadily, he said—

"Fellow, I will spare your life. It may be useful to you, fellow, so I shall spare it. Pass on, pass on, fellow. Low man, you are spared."

Claude was very much amused at what was going on, and probably much more so on account of the evident rage that Jack was in; a rage which he had the greatest difficulty in keeping under, but of the existence of which the dandified personage who had provoked it, did not seem to have the least idea.

"Are you going to get out of the way, fellow?"

"No," said Jack.

"Oh, ah. Then I shall go round, for nothing can be so very horrid, after all, when one comes to think, as to touch a low person, even if one has his own gloves on."

"You really think so!"

"Come on, Frederick, come on," said the young lady, most imploringly. "Why will you thus insult quiet people on the highway? Gentlemen, think nothing of it. Come on, Frederick, come on."

"But I do think something of it," said Jack.

"For my sake, I hope you will not," added the young lady; "now, Frederick, I hope this will be a lesson to you."

"For your sake I will forego," said Jack, "my just resentment in its full extent; but unless this coxcomb asks my pardon, he shall not pass me with his head on."

"My—head? Ah!"

"Yes, your head. I don't expect to find anything, in it, but I'll knock it off if you don't ask pardon."

"Oh, I couldn't—I shall have to slaughter you, fellow, after all. I shall have to send you to another world."

With this the coxcomb made another intimidating flourish of his sword, and Jack dashed at him, and took it from him in a moment. The young lady screamed, and Claude, as he hurried up to her, cried out—

"Moderation, Jack, moderation."

Upon which Jack only broke the sword in two and flung the pieces in the owner's face.

"Do not be alarmed," said Claude to the young lady, "but you will act very injudiciously if you lay your commands upon my friend not to humiliate Frederick. Is he your brother?"

"No—no."

"Nor your husband?"

"Oh no—nor never will be. He is a cousin."

"Oh, very well. Now, Mr. Frederick, I am quite sure all that my friend requires of you is to dismount, beg pardon on your knees, or else I assure you he is just the man to blow your brains out."

"Which I would rather do at once," said Jack, "and have no more bother about it."

"Murder!—blow my brains out!"

"Yes, if you have any. You prefer it, I see," added Jack, and he took a pistol from his pocket, and began to examine the priming very carefully indeed. Upon this, the dandified gentleman was so stunned, that he slipped off his horse, and plumped down upon his knees in the mire of the road, crying—

"Oh, ah! I beg pardon."

"Very good," said Jack. "Now, as far as I am concerned, you may pass on. What my friend may have to say to you is quite another affair, sir."

"I am not at all offended," said Claude, "and shall merely treat the gentleman professionally. Your money, watch, and jewels, sir, if you please, unless you prefer me taking them from your insensible carcass, after I have placed a couple of slugs in your skull."

"A highwayman, by Jupiter!" gasped the dandy.

"Exactly so," said Claude. "Be quick, sir."

In a moment a well-filled purse, a watch, and some rings, were, with an amount of nervous trepidation, quite ludicrous to behold, handed to Claude, and the young lady said—

"I have nothing but a small watch, which is not of much value. Here it is, sir."

Claude bowed as he said—

"I pray you not to do me the injustice of supposing that I could take it from you. I am only vexed to find so much beauty in such indifferent company."

"You are Claude Duval?" said the young lady.

"I am; but I do not know how you could be aware of that fact. I do not, however deny it."

"I guessed it from your manner, sir. A lady of my acquaintance was permitted by you to retain her watch in the same way that you permit me to keep mine, and so I made a guess which turns out to be correct. I hope I may ask of you the favour to let this young man go without any injury or any practical joke being played upon him."

"Certainly. He is free as air. Jack, you have done with your friend, I suppose, now?"

"Quite so," said Jack. "He is too contemptible to have anything further to do with. Let him go."

"I would prefer," added Claude, as he bowed again to the young lady, "that the knowledge of my name should remain in your own breast."

A glance at the exquisite let the young lady know what Claude meant, and she bowed in acquiescence.

"Now sir," said Claude, "mount and be off, for we don't want your company on the road any longer."

Upon this, feeling quite happy to get off so well as he was, the dandy mounted again, and minus his sword, watch, purse, and rings, left the spot, accompanied by the young lady, who at the last moment looked her thanks for his being let go so easily, considering all things. When they were gone, Claude, despite the many anxieties that were then pressing upon his mind, could not help laughing very heartily at the scene that had taken place; and after a time, Jack, although he really at the moment had been very much provoked, could not help joining in the laugh.—

"Well, Claude," he said, "it was ridiculous."

"Most essentially so, Jack, and I really believe that if I had not been here to cry out moderation to you, you would have actually demolished that unfortunate young man, who, after all, was more ridiculous than noxious."

"I ought only to have laughed at him."

"Nay, Jack, I will not go quite so far as that. I think that in breaking his sword you served him quite right, but that was enough. And now until the time shall come for me to keep my appointment with our new friend, who will enable me to have a meeting with Lucy, I will go to the farm and pass a short time with Cicely. We are sure of a cordial welcome there."

"With pleasure," said Jack.

The fact is that Jack always lived in the hope that the time would yet come when Claude would find a means of quitting the perilous and most nervous profession, if it might be so called, in which he was engaged; and he, Jack, thought that if anything more than another could put such thoughts into Claude's head, and keep them there, it would be often to seek the society of Cicely. Thus, Jack was almost more than willing to encourage Claude in turning his horse's head towards the farm.

They both knew the bit of country in which they were amazingly well, and it was after all but a sharp trot of half an hour to bring them to Ealing Common, in the immediate neighbourhood of which was the place they sought. With great joy and alacrity, Claude dived down the little shady

lane, which would take him by the back and unfrequented route across the meadows to the farm, and he and Jack soon passed through a well-known gap in a hedge, and made for the friendly shelter of that roof, beneath which poor Cicely found as much comfort as could possibly be hers in this world, considering the many anxieties that must naturally continually possess her upon Claude's account, knowing as she did the perilous life he led.

If Cicely had not chanced to be, as she was, the companion of Claude, during some of the most perilous of the scenes connected with his attempt to leave England, she would have been much more urgent to him than she now even was to abandon a course of life which was so full of perils. But whenever she did say much upon the subject, Claude had a ready answer by saying—

“Cicely, did I not try, and do you remember the result?”

Too well she remembered that result; and when he did so speak, the gloomy cells of Newgate would rise up before her imagination, and she would shudder at the recollection.

Hence, then, was it that poor Cicely led a life of continual anxieties, beset by doubts and fears, and not knowing whether to urge Claude to make yet another attempt to leave England, or to let him be for a while, until some opportunity might arise to promise him a complete emancipation from his course of life, without any of the perils he had encountered in attempting before to leave it.

She had not seen him now for some days, and she had got naturally anxious to know of his welfare. When, therefore, upon glancing from one of the upper windows of the farm-house, she saw him and Jack leading their horses through a little gate from a small paddock into the farm-yard, her heart leaped for joy.

“He is yet safe,” she said. “He is yet safe. Heaven has heard my prayers, and he is guarded from death. Once more I behold him free and unharmed!”

So intense were her feelings of gratification, that it was some few moments before she could go down stairs to welcome him, and previously to doing so, she had opened the window and called to him and waved her hand.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

CLAUDE DUVAL had some happy moments of his life. One of them certainly was when he saw Cicely's face at the window, radiant with delight at seeing him.

“Well?” he cried. “Well?”

“Yes, Claude; and you?”

“Oh, yes!”

She disappeared from the window, and in the course of the next few moments was in his arms, and sobbing upon his breast.

“So you are quite well, Claude, and you are not hurt—you are sure you are not hurt? You have perhaps been in great danger though, while I was safe and secure. Ah! no I was not secure. I am never secure except I am thus—thus, Claude, close to you, and with the full assurance at my heart that you are not snatched from me by any unexpected blow of fate.”

“And I, Cicely, am never happy except when I can look into your eyes, and know that I am with you; and feel that you are all my own.”

“And you will, neither of you,” said Jack, “ever be quite happy until the sea rolls between you and England.”

“That is true,” said Cicely. “Do you hear it Claude?”

“I do hear it; and well I know that both you and Jack wish for nothing

in the world so much as my happiness and safety; but we will not talk of this now. Neither time nor place are fitting."

"Come in, then," said Cicely, "come into the house. There is an old friend there waiting to see you."

"A visitor?"

"Yes; one who has come on purpose to see you, but who would have left this evening without doing so if you had not chanced to come."

"Tell me who it is, Cicely. I hope you have not been indiscreet enough to take any artful stranger into your confidence? There are many who if they did but know where to find you, would come to you under the pretence of knowing me."

"But this one really knows you. It is my brother."

"Mark Brereton?"

"Yes. It is he, Claude, and with him you know you are quite safe. Is it not so?"

"Yes, indeed; but I thought that he was very far away by this time."

"And so did I, Claude, and so did everybody; but here he comes himself to speak to you, and you may see by his looks how very glad he is to see you. It is partly for my sake, Claude, and partly because he says he cannot help liking you, whether he would or not. Mark, here is Claude."

These two men, with such dissimilar habits and pursuits, met and shook hands most warmly; nothing attaches men so much together as having passed through serious dangers in each others company, and Heaven knows that Mark Brereton had by the merest accidents and freaks of fortune, been thrown into many strange situations with Claude Duval, and he had had, consequently, opportunities of observing what a fine spirit was lost to some worthy career when he, Duval, took to the road. [The adventures here alluded to will be found in the former pages of this volume.]

"And so you are among us again?" said Claude.

"I am. I could not rest until I had seen you and Cicely; and believe me I am not a little pleased to see that you are so well, as you seem to be."

"I am quite well. And you? I fancy I see an improvement in your looks. It is so, is it not?"

"Oh, yes. My health is better. I have been travelling, and that, I find, is always beneficial to me. But I really began to think that I should have great trouble in finding you. I consider your dropping in here to be quite providential."

"Ah, Mark, if you had chosen to stay here a little longer, you might be sure of seeing me here. I only stay away when I cannot help it, and as soon as I feel myself with some hours of liberty upon my hands, my thoughts fly here, and I fly after them."

"I do not doubt it."

They all entered the house together, and then the farmer and his family began to welcome Claude in the warm and kind-hearted manner with which they always greeted him; and in answer to his inquiries, they said that since the little fracas with the parson, of which Claude was quite cognisant, they had not met with any annoyance from any quarter whatever, but lived in perfect peace and security, feeling quite sure that the reverend gentleman had so far kept his word towards them. [See "Grace Manning."]'

All this was pleasant enough news for Claude to hear, and turning to Brereton, he said—

"If all the world would be kind enough to forget me, and allow me to live in such a place as this, the quiet life of a lover of the country and of country pursuits, I should be one of the happiest of men. But they will not. No! Nothing makes the world so angry as any attempt to escape from it; and if you do but try it, slander will be busy with the past, and there are hundreds who will raise the hne-and-cry after you from very wantonness and mischief-loving."

"That is but too true," said Brereton.

"I have found it so, my friend," added Claude. "But we will not sadden any of the joy of this happy meeting by such reflections. The evening is but creeping on, and it will be midnight before I need leave you.

"Leave at midnight?" said Cicely.

"Yes, dearest, I have an appointment with a friend which I hope will not occupy me more than two hours, and if not, I will return here again. But I cannot swear to be back to night again."

"Ah, Claude, your visits are indeed to me like angels; few, and far between."

"Nay," said Claude, with a smile, "but what I am going upon is real business, which ought not to be neglected, as I will convince your brother, Mark, when I tell him; and you will not ask me what it is, I know, Cicely, if I do not freely volunteer to tell you."

"No, Claude, I will not."

"A model of a wife," said Jack, with a smile. "There is but one Cicely in the world, or I think that, tattered by fortune as I am, I might almost yet venture upon matrimony. What say you, Mr. Brereton?"

"You might do worse, Jack."

Claude stepped apart with Brereton, and told him evidently what he was going about at midnight, upon which Brereton replied that he ought not to go alone, and at once proffered his own services to accompany him, adding, that he and Jack would be company for each other while waiting for him, Claude, and that in case of any treachery or unforeseen danger, they could be close at hand to render him effectual assistance.

"I do not anticipate," said Claude, "the slightest peril, for I have ample faith in the man who gave me my information, and who might with the greatest ease have withheld it from me. But if you choose to come, I will not say no. You have a horse here, I suppose?"

"Yes, and a good one too."

"Be it so then; and Jack, who, as a matter of course, will follow me, will be glad enough of your company, and for the matter of that we can all ride together to the common."

"We can, and I sincerely hope, for all our sakes, you will be able to ward off any threatened danger from the desperate woman you mention. The passions of such persons are dangerous alike to themselves and to others."

"It shall be done," said Claude.

We must not follow the conversation that took place at the farm-house now, further than to say that it was of a most friendly and affectionate character among all those assembled, until Claude, upon hearing the old kitchen clock strike twelve, rose and said it was his time to go.

Upon this, both Brereton and Jack rose likewise, and although the cause of his absence at such an hour happened to be one which Claude did not like to explain to Cicely, she felt tolerably satisfied upon finding that Jack and her brother were going with him. He promised to get back with all the expedition in his power, and the fact of Mark Brereton accompanying him was of itself sufficient to assure her that it was no perilous, marauding adventure he was going on, for had such been the case she well knew that Brereton would have nothing to do with it.

The night was more than usually dark, and neither Claude nor his companion could have had much chance of reaching the high road, had not one of the family from the farm-house come with them as a guide that far. The young man who accompanied them led Claude's horse, and the rest followed until they were on the high road that goes along Ealing Common.

"Ah," said Duval, "I know where I am now. I could find my way where I am going blindfolded, if it were at all necessary, so well do I know every inch of it, and every tree, and every turning and winding it can take."

"Then I will leave you now," said the young man.

"You may, my friend, and I thank you for coming so far with me. I

hope to be back at the farm in two hours. Now, my friends, a sharp trot will very soon take us to Hounslow Heath."

They all three set off at a trot that got over the ground very quickly, for the horses had been well seen to at the farm, and were consequently in first-rate condition. It seemed as though they reached Hounslow Heath in an incredibly short space of time; and when Claude suddenly cried out—

"Here we are."

Brereton said, "Where?"

"Why, on the heath," said Claude.

"Indeed! You must have brought us by a very near route in good truth, Duval."

"Yes, both Jack and I know the way pretty well. But now, my friends, I will, if you please, go forward alone, and you can easily keep quiet in the neighborhood of the spot to which I am bound. Jack, you know it well enough?"

"I do," said Jack; "but let us agree upon some signal, which if we hear will be a hint to us to ride up."

"Very well. If you hear a pistol shot, you may safely enough conclude that your presence will not be amiss. But I do not for one moment anticipate any danger, only I grant always that it is the best to be prepared for the worst that may happen."

"Unquestionably," said Brereton; "so we shall listen for the signal with the hope of not hearing it, for it will be much better if you are able to settle the affair amicably, Claude."

"Much, indeed. Farewell now for a brief space, I think, only. Yonder lies my route."

With this Claude rode off, and was in a very few moments completely lost to all view in the dense obscurity of the night, that seemed to hang over the heath like a funeral pall.

Before he had proceeded very far on his road, which he had to guess at more by instinct than anything else, he became conscious of a dullish red light some short distance ahead of him, and apparently just in the direction he was going, for it shone faintly upon the ruined barn which had been mentioned to him by the man who had personated Dick Turpin.

Claude could not conceive what this light could be, and it was so very near to the earth, too, that upon that account it still more puzzled him. While, however, he was straining his eyes to make something more of it, it suddenly disappeared.

"This, I suppose, is one of the mysteries of the heath," he said, "which probably my new friend may be able to tell me something about, when I am so fortunate as to see him."

He did not in the least relax in his speed on account of this phenomenon, and he soon felt conscious that he must have reached the old barn. He accordingly slackened the speed of his horse. He dismounted, and reaching out his hands, distinctly felt the wall of the old barn, and after a little time he found a place to which he could attach the bridle of his horse; and having done so, he went carefully on, on foot, until he suddenly, upon turning the angle of the barn, came upon the cottage, which was clearly enough observable by the light that streamed out from its little casement.

"All's right," he said, "that is the place."

He advanced rapidly, and tapped at the door with the handle of his heavily loaded whip. In a moment it was opened, and the man whom he had expected to meet stood upon the threshold.

"Ah, I am glad to see you," he said.

"Thank you," replied Claude; "is she here?"

"No; but walk in; I don't know what has come over her to-night, she has been in and out a dozen times at the least. She will be back very soon, I feel assured."

"Why, where has she got to go to?" said Claude, as he slipped into the

cottage. "I don't know of another habitation within a good half-mile of this upon the heath."

"Nor I; but there are some gipsies' tents in the neighborhood, and she seems to have struck up some sort of acquaintance with them."

"Nothing more likely," said Claude. "She always used to make a kind of joke of saying there was gipsy blood in her veins, and I suppose it was true enough. But I will wait for her, and talk to her, poor girl. I hope she will come soon."

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE place in which Claude found himself now, was by no means one of the most inviting in the world. In fact, a hut more destitute of common comforts than that was, could not have been imagined.

With the meanest and poorest habitation the world ever saw, there is always a something to be done, if there is one to do it, that will give it an air of home comfort; but then again, it requires some one who loves a home to do that, and not so brooding and strange a spirit as that of the young girl whom Claude had come to see. What cared she if the cottage looked squalid or not? Her own cruel passions were all that occupied her thoughts; and having an undisguised contempt for the man who was the sharer of the wretched abode with her, it was not likely that she would even make an effort of the slightest description to bestow an air of home comfort upon the place; on the contrary, she took a gloomy, and misanthropical satisfaction in its being what it was.

The walls were marked with unwholesome damp; a glimmering fire was upon the hearth, and the sole furniture consisted of a broken-down deal table, and some apologies for chairs. In one corner were some coarse pieces of board nailed up so as to make something resembling shelves, upon which some cracked and chipped pieces of crockery were placed; and another corner had partially hiding it a kind of curtain hung to a cord, but it was so blackened by age, that its material could not be defined. The floor was sanded, and as that had been freshly done, the material being in abundance upon the heath, that portion of the wretched dwelling looked better than any other.

"This is a sorry place, Claude Duval, to introduce you to," said the man.

"It certainly is not a palace, my friend. You don't seem to find the road very profitable?"

"I don't know. I dare say it's as good to me as most, always excepting such as yourself. But she won't let me be comfortable. Oh, she's a hard bargain."

"Why don't you leave her, then?"

"Well, somehow or another, I have got used to the girl, and when I do come here, I like even to have her to talk to, in preference to nobody. But she might make the crib a little tidier."

"Truly, she might, my friend. What is that?"

A faint low whistle had sounded from without, and Claude rose from the rather insecure chair upon which he had seated himself at the request of the man.

"It's some of the gipsies, I'll be bound. They are, as I mentioned to you, Claude Duval, in the neighbourhood, and it's odd but that they are up to some game or another. I will just pop out for a few moments, and see what they are about, if you like."

"Do so; and if you can see Lucy, tell her that I am here, and would fain speak with her."

"I will."

Any one less confident in his own resources, and more suspicious of foul

play than Claude Duval, would have hesitated about permitting the man to leave the hut so immediately upon an apparent signal being made from the outside; but Claude took no notice of such little matters, unless he had very good reason indeed to feel their importance, nor was he wrong in the confidence he put in his new friend, as will quickly enough appear.

"For the sake of Cicely, whose safety is so very dear to me," said Claude to himself, as he glanced round the wretched hut, "I must say all I can say to the poor girl who calls this her home. I would that I could see her. Ah! that whistle again. What can it mean?"

The door of the hut was opened a little way, and the head and face of a man looked in. It did not require more than the most hasty glance to let Claude see that he was one of the gipsies.

"Izra," said the stranger. "Where are you now, girl?" and then observing Claude by the miserable light that was upon the table, he shaded his eyes for a moment with his hands and cried—"Who are you? You ain't the usual fox that is in the old lair?"

"Do you wish particularly to know who I am?" said Claude; "for if you do not I prefer keeping that news to myself."

With a short impatient growl the stranger withdrew his head, and banged the front door shut again.

Claude, as a measure of ordinary precaution, looked at his pistols, for well he knew the extreme jealousy with which the gipsies looked upon any one whom they could have the slightest reason to suppose was a spy upon them; and that they held human life under such circumstances cheap enough, he was likewise well aware. The man upon whose good faith he placed reliance, had been gone rather an unreasonable time, and Claude was upon the point of thinking he might as well sally out into the night air to make his own observations, when the door of the hut was hastily opened, and the man appeared.

"Have you seen her?" said Claude.

"I have—she comes. At the mention of your name she was furious, and I thought she would have struck me to the earth. She vows that she will have vengeance against you."

"Pho! pho!"

"You do not fear her?"

"I fear her? My friend, you know less of me than I thought you did, if you fancy that I fear her. I have come here to subdue her—to frighten her; and I will do it."

"If you do frighten her," said the man, "you will be a match for any one, be they ever so mad. But hark? I hear her footsteps on the heath. She comes!"

"Tell me," said Claude quickly. "Has she seen the gipsies since you told her I was here?"

"One man she has seen and held some discourse with, but I know not the subject of it."

"Well, it matters not. Leave us together for a short time, my friend, when she comes here, but be within call, and you may be within hearing too. Indeed, I would rather you were."

"She don't know I am here. I will hide behind yon curtain if you like."

"Do so. Quick! I hear her coming."

The footpad, for such was his real vocation, had only just time to conceal himself behind the curtain in the corner of the hut, when the door was flung violently open, and Lucy sprang into the little room. Claude never moved from his seat which he had occupied again, but he let her come right up to him, and waited patiently for what she might choose to say. Her anger and impatience soon found words, and in a voice of fury she shouted rather than said—

"So, Claude Duval, you have come here to make me a present of your life, have you? Fool! Where is your boasted cleverness now? Idiot, you

are at my mercy now! Ha! ha! Yes, the famous Claude Duval is at my mercy!"

Claude slowly pointed to the open door of the hut, and in a cold, calm voice, he said—

"Shut that door!"

"What!" she cried. "You dare to address me in such a tone! You dare to do it!"

"Shut that door!"

"Ha! ha! You order me!"

"Shut that door, woman!"

She shrunk back evidently cowed, and with a forced laugh she said, as she closed the door—

"Well, perhaps one don't want all the world to hear what one says—that's all. There, the door is shut. What do you want with me, Claude Duval?"

"Much."

"Say it, then. Oh, I ain't to be cowed and beaten down by you. No. Those times are past long since, I should think. I will have my revenge. Come, speak to me. What do you want, now that you have taken all this trouble to find me out?"

"Trouble I have not taken," said Claude. "I was told where you were, and I came, so that it has not cost me any trouble. Sit down, Lucy."

"No, I will stand."

"But I say you shall sit down. Do you dare to stand when I tell you to sit down?"

She dropped into one of the miserable seats, and with a growl she added—

"There, then, I am sitting down. What do you want now?"

"Is it true, or is it false, that you have uttered threats against my wife?"

"Your wife—wife! Ha, ha! That is good, indeed. So you came here to try to persuade me that you are married, do you?"

"It is true; and if you contradict me again, I will send your head through that wall. Answer me that which I ask of you. I want none of your comments. Is it true that you have uttered threats against my wife?"

"Yes; and what then?"

"Why, then, you shall retract them, and upon your knees you shall take a solemn oath (I know that you are superstitious) that you will never raise a hand to do her harm. That is my errand here, and I will fulfil it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Lucy. I thought you knew enough of me to be aware that I was a man likely to keep my word, even in so small an affair as this."

The girl looked at him for a few moments in silence, and then, in a deep, solemn tone, she said—

"Will you swear to me, by all your hopes here and hereafter, that you are really married?"

"I will. But I think my word ought to have amply sufficed. Yet I most solemnly swear it."

She shook as if moved by some strong convulsions, and then in a high cracked tone she spoke—

Claude Duval, there was a time when you affected to love me—when you told me that no eyes were so bright as mine—when you cajoled me to be yours by the promise that our union, although it was not ratified by the ceremony of the church, should be eternal. There was a time when I was to you everything—when at my request you would come and go, and be as kind as a summer's day was long."

"Well?"

"Can you hear me talk in such a strain, Claude Duval, and say nothing but 'Well' in reply to me? Can you sit and look upon my ruined face, and look the while so calm, when you know you made me what I am?"

"Lucy, you know that that is false; I did not make you what you are. Do not attribute it to me. You know well that I lifted you from much



Dick Turpin in Prison, visited by Claude and Jack.

misery and degradation to make you my companion. That you did not continue to be such, was owing wholly to your own stormy passions. But this is a profitless discussion, and one that it is folly for us to engage in. I came for another purpose."

"Then I tell you, Duval, that you will not accomplish that other purpose."

"So you say?"

"Ay, and so it will be. I have sworn that I would be revenged upon her who has taken you from me, and I will be so revenged. But for her the time would have come when I might again have been with you; but your marriage places all that aside, and I know that it may not be. Therefore it is, that as I am wretched, you shall be wretched."

"Miserable woman, can you possibly find any sort of gratification in such insensate raving?"

"It is not raving. It is the truth."

"You know that it is not. You know well that I am not one to be trifled with, and that if I for one moment really thought there was any danger to her whom I love to be apprehended from you, I would take such measures as would thoroughly prevent you from being such an enemy to yourself, as to carry out your foolish threats. Well you know all that, and now I say to you, Lucy, make me the solemn promise that you will bear no such malicious thoughts about with you."

"I will not."

"Reflect again, foolish girl! Reflect that by my coming to ask you so much I show you that I have still some esteem left for you. Reflect, I say, before it be too late, upon my words."

"I have reflected until my brain has been on fire. I have thought until thought, too, became madness; and I tell you, Claude Duval, that if I live I must have my revenge. You can kill me if you like to do so. I do not deny your power to kill a weak girl; but my death shall sit far heavier upon your soul than my present threats."

"I give you another moment for thought."

"It is useless; had I an age for thought, the result would be the same; I could not—I would not alter my determination. It is made, and it is fixed as though it held to my heart with iron grappling-hooks. I will have revenge!"

CHAPTER LXXIX.

UP to this point, it would almost seem that Claude had had some faint hopes of being able to turn the infuriated girl from her purpose; but now he looked upon that hope as gone; and he could not but see that she was madly wedded to it. The idea of taking her life, or of doing her the least bodily mischief, never came into his imagination for a moment, but he had concocted a plan of operations as regarded her, if he found her in the temper that he did, which, however, reluctant under ordinary circumstances he would be to carry out, he yet felt was his only resource. He knew that there was, not far from the high-road of Hammersmith a private mad-house, the keeper of which was unscrupulous enough to detain every one who was well paid for, without being particular either as to the amount of madness, or the nature of the authority under which he held them; and it was to that establishment that Claude thought himself authorised to take Lucy; provided he found her in such a state of mind as would be decidedly inimical to the safety of Cicely.

It would seem, however, as if the poor creature had seen by the expression of his eye, that he intended something that would be prejudicial to her life or liberty, for suddenly starting up before he could move from his seat, she darted from the cottage, saying, as she went, something in the gipsy tongue, which to Claude was perfectly incomprehensible.

The man came out from his place of retreat behind the curtain, and said at once—

"Go, Claude, from her. Make speed and insure your safety. There is upon the Heath a large party of gipsies, and if she gets them to side with her, they are capable of committing any act of desperation or of blood!"

"I will not leave her thus."

"Nay, what more can you say or do now, then you have said and done already? Leave her to me, Claude Duval, and I may find perhaps some opportunity of speaking to her, when she is calmer. Besides, you should always reflect that an angry woman says much more than she means."

"I have reflected upon that. But this girl is mad, I can see she is, or why at such a time as this, when all sort of connection with me has long since been forgotten, should she become so furious?"

As Claude spoke there came upon the night air a strange low moaning sound, and he looked at the man for an explanation of it.

"It is the gathering of the gipsies," he said. "I know their habits and feelings well, for I have lived with several of the largest tribes. Heaven only knows what that maddened girl may say to them, to stir their hatred against you. I tell you Duval, you are anything but safe here."

"And yet I shall remain."

"It is madness."

"No, not so. I have friends within call whom I can summon to my side. When I begin an adventure I like to go through with it, and this one is anything but satisfactorily settled as yet. I am not without hope of getting Lucy to a better disposition."

"You do not know her then so well as I do. As well might you attempt to make the stoutest oak of the forest bow before your breath, as get that girl to listen to reason, when her passion tells her to be unreasonable."

"She is changed, but yet she is human."

"Hark! The moaning sound continues. It is the peculiar sound made by the gipsies, when they are meeting under the impulse of some strong excitement. Again I urge you to seek safety in flight. Come this way. I can take you out by another way from the hut, and you can seek your friends."

"Urge me no more. I cannot think there is much danger. Surely the lawless people who live such a life of wandering and defiance of the rest of the community cannot feel much more than sympathy with one of my profession, and they have sense enough, I should fancy, not to pay much attention to the ravings of a jealous girl. I should scarcely forgive myself, my friend, if I were to fly from such a danger as this. Compose yourself and trust to me, that so far as regards my personal safety, all will be well; at the same time, let me thank you for your kind solicitude, and assure you that I feel it deeply."

"It is so much my doing your being here at all, that I should feel myself, almost like your murderer should anything disastrous happen to you. But since you will stay, remember that I will stand or fall by you, and that you may depend upon me, let the emergency be what it may."

"I know it, and will do so. They come."

A strange half-suppressed kind of shout now arose on the night air from the outside of the hut and through the chinks, which were sufficiently numerous, in the walls, there came the red glare of torches. Claude took care to keep as near the centre of the place as possible, so that he might not be taken by surprise by any one, for the walls were quite frail enough to enable anybody who might wish to get into the wretched building in that way to push right through at any part. It did not at the moment occur to Claude that the roof might be in worse condition still, and he was at the moment rather startled to hear a sudden crash accompanied by a rushing noise, and to find a man alight close to him from the old thatch.

The gipsy's features, the long black dishevelled hair, and the sparkling eyes at once told Claude that it was one of the lawless race that stood before him with a knife in his hand.

"Die!" cried the gipsy. "Die, enemy of the child of our race."

Claude sprang upon him in a moment.

"My friend," he said, "you mistook the roof for the door, and I never allow any one to come in where I am, without knocking first. Pray tell your friends outside as much, if you please."

As he spoke, Claude made one of those tremendous efforts of strength, which at times only, and under extraordinary circumstances, he thought proper to exert. He lifted the gipsy to the height of some six feet from the floor, and then dashed him like a shot head-foremost through the little casement of the hut, and the force with which he went was so great that it had all the appearance as though he had been projected by some powerful mechanical means.

The gipsy raised a loud shriek as he went thus unceremoniously out of the hut, that he thought he had so very cleverly got into.

"You have killed him!" said the man.

"Possibly, but those fellows take a deal of killing. I very much doubt if he is other than a little hurt by the broken glass of the window, and you may depend that he alighted on his feet. Gipsies and cats always do—begging the pardon of cats for the association."

You are a strange man, Claude; but look to your arms."

All's right, I have a couple of pairs of pistols that I know I can depend upon. How are you provided in that particular?"

"Very well indeed. But you spoke of your friends; are they far off, or can you summon them at a moment or two's notice?"

"They are close at hand. At the first pistol shot that is fired by either party they will make their appearance; I shall not fire it unless urged by some uncommon necessity so to do, and I beg that you will be as feeling as you can."

"I will—I will!"

The low shout of the gipsies again came upon their ears, and in the course of a few moments some one tapped at the door of the hut. The man was about to answer it, but Claude said, "Permit me," and then in a clear unembarrassed voice he cried—

"Who is there?"

"One who demands admission," said a voice.

"Take it then. The door is on the latch. What hinders you except fear? The fear that always besets men upon a bad errand. Why do you not come in?"

The door was opened, and a tall dusky-looking man in a tattered cloak appeared upon the threshold.

"Claude Duval," he said, "we know you."

"Then you have the advantage of me," said Claude, "and I do not at all envy you it, for I am not by any means solicitous for your acquaintance."

"Peace," said the tall gipsy. "This trifling as ill becomes me as it does you. I come with a demand."

"Make it then."

"You must repudiate her whom you call your wife, and you must take again to your home and to your affections, by such ceremonies as we may think proper, her whom you have discarded, and who is one of our people. That is the sentence of our tribe; and if you refuse, the bitter consequences must fall upon your own head."

"And pray what may those consequences be?" said Claude.

"Death!"

"Then my dingy-looking friend, I differ very much from you; and if you are the ambassador of your tribe, you can go back to it, and say that I am married already, and that if I were not, I should at once and most unhesitatingly decline any of their ceremonies or any of their people. If, as I suspect, you are all allowing yourselves to be stirred up to this folly by a girl who calls herself Lucy, I can only say, that you don't any of you know her half so well as she is known upon the pavé of London; and the very best and most creditable thing you can all do concerning her, is to disown the connection, for it will bring upon you all nothing but disgrace and trouble."

"False wretch!" cried a female voice, and an old woman with long matted hair and a tattered red cloak about her, rushed into the hut. "False villain! she whom you speak of is my child, and she is as virtuous as she is beautiful. It is you only, who have led her into the paths of vice; and repugnant as we are to an union with a stranger, you shall, according to our forms, wed her."

"Madam," said Claude, "the less we say of the virtue of your daughter, the better. The subject is a very ticklish one, and I sincerely advise you to drop it."

"You shall wed her! She has decided that she will be satisfied if you repudiate your wife, as you call her, and wed her. You will then be pardoned your many iniquities towards her, and from that time we will receive you as one of us. So, rejoice—rejoice—rejoice?"

Claude could hardly help laughing at the inflated manner of the old woman; and when she told him, with the air of some ancient priestess, striking a grand attitude at the same time, to rejoice, she certainly got the better of his gravity altogether, and he laughed outright.

The old gipsy woman gave a perfect yell of rage at this, but Claude raised his hand, and cried in a clear voice—

"Silence, woman! Your ridiculous denunciations and absurd inflation of language, may go down very well in some hovel, but permit me to say that I am rather a matter-of-fact personage, and that consequently, your raving has by no means the effect upon me that no doubt you wish it to have. If the foolish young woman, Lucy, is your daughter, the best advice you can possibly, as a mother, give her, is, to be quiet, and to do her best now to quell the tumult that she has been the absurd cause of raising."

"He dies! he dies!" cried the old woman. "His death shall be upon his own head! He dies! he dies?"

"Yes," said Claude, "when my time comes I shall certainly die; but not yet, I think I have a well-grounded expectation of living some time yet. And now, in all seriousness, I warn you, and your tribe of ragamuffins, that I am a man fond of a joke in its way, but I do not like it to be carried too far, and when I begin to be serious, it is rather apt to be a serious thing for other people. This man who is with me can tell you as much of me; so I warn you, and it will be well for you and all your tribe, Lucy included, if the warning be taken in good time."

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE manner of Claude Duval during this most perilous adventure, probably had more effect upon the gipsies than anything he said or did. They were perfectly astounded to find, for the first time in their lives, a man who, alone, laughed at their traditional appetite for revenge; and in replying to their high-flown threats, only treated them to a little common-sense, such as they well knew the truth of, but most certainly were not in the habit of hearing.

And all that he said, too, was said in such a calm, quiet, confident air, as if their power against him was really nothing, while his against them, one would have thought was infinite.

The woman, in particular, who had thought to bear him down by hard words, and an assumption of the stage-priestess style, was evidently cowed, and if she had but had the candour to say so, she would have admitted that for once, if it were only for once, she had met her match, in meeting with one who knew how to treat with cool contempt those empty threats which only borrowed a little force from the lofty language in which they were couched.

Claude Duval knew much more of the gipsies, and of their strange habits and traditions, than they were aware of; and among other things that he knew of them, he well knew that they dreaded nothing so much as a collision with the law. It was quite a principle with them to put up with a general injury done to them, rather than provoke the regard of public opinion, and of public persons; for leading the strange vagabond life that they did, they lived in constant dread in so highly civilized and carefully cultivated a country as England, of being put down, if we may be allowed the expression.

The old gipsy woman, however, although it was quite clear that she trem-

bled before Claude, made yet another effort to obtain the mastery over him, and so accomplish her object, which was now to get rid of him as quickly as possible.

Throwing herself into an attitude, as though she were quite an inspired personage, she cried—

“Ah! the spirits of another world speak to me. The dim future, like the course of some mighty river, seen from the mountain top, unfurls itself before me. My children, we will spare this man.”

A yell of disappointment from the dark throng of gipsies at the door of the hut was the response to this announcement.

“Yes,” added the old woman. “It must be so. Go in peace, stranger, from our people. Go in peace, I say, and never let us look upon your shadow again. Never—never!”

“No, no,” cried the gipsies. “Down with him! kill him, kill him! Down with him. He has done a deed to bring shame upon our tribe. Down with him! kill him, kill him!”

“No,” cried the old woman, “I say no!”

“You need not contend about me,” said Claude, calmly. “I have come here for an especial purpose, and I will perform my mission.”

“Fool!” cried Lucy, suddenly springing towards him, from the open door of the hut, and clutching him by the arm. “How many lives have you that you can afford to play with them thus? Let me ask you that, idiot that you are.”

“Upon my word; Lucy,” said Claude, “you are very complimentary; but permit me to say, that I look upon you as the fool, for you are the author of a disturbance here, that in the end these worthy people will not thank you for stirring up.”

“They are my people,” said Lucy, making a very faint effort indeed to imitate the manner of the old woman.

“They may,” added Claude, “or they may not be your people. You may have gipsy blood in your veins, for all I know; and this anything but respectable-looking old lady may be your mother, upon the principle that as unquestionably you had a mother, she may as well fill that situation regarding you as any other person. But I have yet to learn what all that has to do with my object here?”

“Your object is defeated,” said Lucy. “This is my mother, and those whom you see and hear are my tribe. Your object, I say, is defeated. It was to threaten me—it was to frighten me from my revenge; but I will not be frightened from it. I will have revenge upon her whom you have taken to your heart, after once placing me there!”

Claude smiled.

“You laugh? A knife—a knife! I will kill him myself! He laughs at my seared and broken heart. A knife, I say! I will myself kill the man who has made me what I am, and who now scorns the gipsy’s child; will no one give me the means of present vengeance? Is there no brother of my tribe who will give it to me?”

A long glittering knife was thrown on to the floor of the hut, within a few paces of where Lucy stood. With one stride Claude put his foot upon it, as he said in a loud clear voice—

“If the man who threw this knife will come here, I will throttle him for his pains.”

No one came, and the dark throng of persons at the door of the miserable little place rather drew back than otherwise.

“Give me the knife,” said Lucy.

“Pho! girl,” cried Claude, “you are a fool; you overact your part.”

He seized her by one wrist, and, although he by no means held her with any painful pressure, yet she found it as impossible to escape from that grasp as if it had been one of iron.

“He holds me!” she cried. “He wants to kill me!”

"Not at all, Lucy," said Claude, "for if such a foolish idea had ever entered my brain, I could and would have done it long ago. But I will, now that I have got you, hold you fast."

"Help! help!"

"Oh, you may shout for help as much as you please. I will take care that you shall come to no more harm, at all events, than your own obstinacy may bring upon you; but if any of your dark-skinned relations interfere with me, let them look to it, for I shall not be very particular how I retaliate."

"Mother! mother!" cried Lucy.

"Let her go," said the gipsy-woman. "We will bury the past in deep oblivion. You shall be adopted into our tribe, and Lucy, according to the mystic rites and ceremonies of our ancient race, shall be your wife."

"I decline the honour," said Claude.

"You decline?"

"Yes; I am already married, according to what probably you would call the mystic rites and ceremonies of my own people; and if I were at all inclined for a plurality of wives, I should not come here for the second one, so, with a great appreciation of the honour, I despise it."

"He contemns us!" cried the old woman.

"Vengeance! vengeance!" cried those without the hut.

"Hark, you," said Claude; "if this girl will, even now, in the presence of yourself and of her people, which she calls the savages outside, retract her mad threats against one, whom it is my inclination as much as it is my duty to protect, and will make a solemn oath that, by word or deed, she will not seek to injure her, I will depart in peace."

"No—no!" cried Lucy.

The old woman spoke, in the patois of the gipsies, to some of those who were upon the threshold of the door, and turning to Claude, she said—

"It is done—it is done. Now go."

"What is done?"

"You may go in peace, with an assurance that nothing will be attempted against the person of whom you speak."

"Is this so, Lucy?" said Claude.

"No!" cried the girl, with vehemence. "If my lips were to utter as much my heart would not. I call upon my people to avenge me upon you, and I will avenge myself upon her who stands between you and me."

"That is quite enough," said Claude.

"She knows not what she says," cried the old woman. "Passion is in her heart and brain. In a calmer hour she will think differently; I will in the meantime be answerable for her, you can take my word."

"I wish I thought I could," said Claude, "but I have always found that I could take any one's word for mischief much sooner than I could take it for good. If Lucy herself had acceded to my conditions, I would have left her, for I should have felt that I had no right to ask more; but as she has not, I hold her as my prisoner."

"Your prisoner?"

"Yes; my prisoner. Do I not speak plainly? I say, I hold her as my prisoner, and I will not let her be at liberty to carry out her threats, in the smallest particular. My determination is to take her now away with me, dead or alive?"

"Save me! save me!" cried Lucy.

"There will be murder done," whispered the footpad to Claude; for your wife's sake, let her go now."

"No—not while I have life to hold her.—I give every one fair warning. If any of you interfere with me I will blow your brains out. I am well armed, and I will do it. My mind is wound up to my object, and I will carry it out, so help me Heaven!"

The tone of voice in which Duval uttered these words for a few moments struck absolute terror into the hearts of all who heard him. Even Lucy,

nerved as she was by strong passions, shook again. The old woman stamped with rage, and advanced two steps, crying—

“You would drag my child to a prison?”

“No,” said Claude. “But I will take care of her. If she is so very fond of me as she pretends, why all this fuss about going with me?”

“You do not take her in affection.”

“Certainly not.”

“Then she shall not go. My children—brave spirits of our ancient tribes! I let loose your wrath against this man. I withdraw all interdiction. I no longer say to you, spare him. But I tell you to kill—kill—kill!”

A loud howl of delight came from those on the outside, and one dark figure darted into the hut and made an attempt to cast himself at Claude's feet, and seize him by the ancles, which, if he had succeeded in doing, would have embarrassed Claude very much, and indeed, in all probability would have defeated him; but Duval was well aware that that mode of fighting was practised by the gipsies, and he was prepared to resist it in the only manner in which it can and ought to be resisted.

With one of the heavy riding boots that he had on, he gave the gipsy who tried the cunning manœuvre, such a frightful kick in the face, that with a yell of pain, he rolled right out of the hut, among his companions.

“Come on,” cried Claude, “I am quite prepared for that species of attack. Come on, cowards—come on!”

It was all very well for Claude so say “come on,” but after the reception that their comrade had met with, the gipsies did not exactly see the amusement of coming on. The old woman suddenly said something in a loud voice, and then rushing from the hut, she slammed the door of it shut.

“What are they going to be about now?” said Claude to the footpad.

“I cannot imagine. I don't know what the old gipsy said. Their language is only very slightly known to me. What do you mean to do, Claude, with the girl?”

“Take her with me, of course. She has fainted. Excess of passion has got the better of her at last, and before she recovers I shall, I hope, have her in a place of safety. We must manage to leave the hut, my friend, as quickly as possible.”

“They are barricading the door.”

“Indeed! What can that be for?”

“Hush! hush! Ah, now I guess.”

“You guess what?”

“That they are going to burn us out. Hark, the old woman is raving away at a great rate. I think they are about to do something that she disapproves of. The fact is, they care nothing for this girl, for they do not at all acknowledge her as one of them; but the old woman has a certain amount of authority among them, which they allow her to exercise until their own passions got the upperhand of them.”

“Now, then, you think it is merely an affair of private vengeance against me, do you?”

“Yes; the manner in which you have treated two of them has made them almost mad, and they will think nothing of sacrificing Lucy if, with her, they can sacrifice you.”

“Do you really think so?”

“I am sure of it. They keep repeating the word ‘fire’ in their own tongue, and I believe that they will set light to the thatch of the hut.”

“Ah, there is very little doubt but what that will be their game. Now you mention it, I can easily imagine that it is just the sort of thing that would suggest itself to them; and the old woman opposes it on account of Lucy, no doubt.”

“She does.”

“Put out the light, my friend. Without it we shall be better able to judge of what they are about. The turf upon the hearth will give us sufficient

light to prevent us being taken by surprise through the roof, or by any other extemporaneous modes of entrance."

The footpad put out the light, and then, as Claude had said, there was a dim twilight throughout the little hut from the glowing turfs on the hearth. A very strange and unnatural stillness was without, and as Claude felt no doubt of the genuineness of the faint of Lucy, he placed her upon two chairs, and waited the result of the gipsies' proceedings, with a most admirable coolness and self-possession, that was much envied by the footpad.

"Are you sure," he said, "that the girl is not playing you a trick?"

"Quite. You mean, do I think she has really fainted?"

"Yes; that is it. She has played me so many games and tricks, that I am suspicious of her."

"I know her well, my friend. But you don't seem very much cut up at the idea of parting from her?"

"I cut up? oh, no. Quite the reverse. Her temper was tolerably violent before, but now, I expect, after all this, if she were to stay with me, I should never have one moment's peace; so I beg that you will take her, and let me get rid of her in any way. I should go in fear of my very life."

"I should not wonder. But go to the window, my friend, and both look and listen. You know something of the dialect of the gipsies, and I do not. If you can come to any correct information as to what they are about, I shall be glad to hear it."

"I will, Claude. You keep an eye on the girl, and likewise keep both ears and eyes open to be on the alert in case of those rascals trying any of their tricks. They are quite as artful as so many savages."

"I know it. I will be careful."

The footpad listened at the window, and in a few moments he came to Claude, and said, in a low tone—

"I am certain some one of them is on the roof."

"I was thinking the same thing," said Claude.

"You have heard him then?"

"I have; but you look to the general safety while I adopt a mode of meeting the fellow. Where is my hat?—oh, I have it. That will do. Have you a stick?"

"Yes. Here is one."

"Very good. Do not say a word now."

All was profoundly still, and Duval took one of the glowing red hot turfs and placed it upon the crown of his hat, taking the precaution previously to place a cold turf under it, so that it should not in a moment, as it otherwise would have done, burn through the crown. He then placed the stick in the hat, and held it behind his back, and waited under the large hole that was in the roof for the gipsy.

As he stood in the hut under the hole in the little miserable thatched roof, through which it will be recollected that one of the gipsies had made an attempt to come down upon Claude, and been so summarily ejected again, he could just see some portion of the night sky and one star.

That star would rapidly, no doubt, have passed over his plane of vision, but he kept his eyes fixed upon it, and in the course of about half a minute it was suddenly obscured by something black being thrust before it.

Claude did not doubt for one moment but that that something was the face of a gipsy on the roof, and it was for such a contingency that he had the little piece of apparatus ready that we have noticed above.

The turf was glowing hot, and in one instant, by the aid of the stick in the hat, Claude thrust it up with sharp and sudden vehemence into the face of the gipsy. A yell of pain and rage, and a shower of red hot sparks from the turf on to the floor of the hut, testifying amply to the success of the plan. Then there was a rolling sound over the roof, and the unmistakable indication of a heavy fall outside

"I rather think," said Claude, "that I have singed that gentleman's whiskers, if he had any to singe."

"You must, indeed," said the footpad, "have punished him severely."

"Serves him right. He had no business there."

"None in the least. But I should not have thought of such a plan, if I had puzzled my brain for twelve months upon the subject. Of a truth, Claude Duval, you have a most fertile imagination."

"One needs it, my friend, when one has to deal with such a set of demi-savages as these gipsies."

"They are quite savages when they are enraged; for then they forget that they are in a civilized country, and encompassed by the restraints of the law."

"Ah, they begin now."

"By Heaven! they do. They have fired the thatch, and the old hut will soon be about our ears. What on earth is to be done now, Claude Duval?"

"Don't be alarmed," said Claude; "all will be well yet."

"Think you so?"

"I feel assured it will. The walls of this hut are not very strong, my friend. Perhaps you know the weakest part. Break through it, and then we will leave the place. No doubt, it is the door that is most looked to by the gipsies."

"Yes; but they are all round the hut."

"Never mind that. All will be well. They are people who deal in threats, but nothing else."

"I will soon open a way to the heath," said the footpad. "Nothing is much easier to do than that, Claude, in such a place as this."

"Quick, then."

The footpad set about opening a hole in the wall at the back of the hut, and by the rattling of the falling rubbish of which the wall was composed, Claude could hear that he was being speedily successful.

And now the hut presented, both from without and from within, a very strange appearance indeed. The thatch was all on fire, and blazed up rather freely, while the inside was tolerably cool and comfortable, for the artificial current produced by the flames brought in at every crevice, as well as by the broken window, a strong draught of cold air; and no doubt, from without, the appearance was that the whole place was in one blaze.

Claude picked up Lacy, and flung her over his right shoulder, as he said, in a low tone—

"Are you ready?"

"Quite," said the footpad.

"Very good. Follow me, if you wish to get away; or, possibly, you would rather remain, since it is not against you that the rage of the gipsies is invoked?"

"No. It is not against me specially, but yet I feel that this is no place for me now. When you are gone, they will want some one to be revenged upon, and they may just as well light upon me as not. I will go with you, Claude, if you will permit me."

"Certainly. Come on."

The opening that the footpad had made in the wall was just wide enough to admit of one person only to pass out of the hut by it; and Claude took the lead. In his breast he had placed a pair of pistols in such readiness that he could avail himself of their services at a moment's notice, and in his right hand he held the powerful stick—which was more like a hedge stake than anything else—which he had used to thrust the hat, upon which was the lighted turf, into the gipsy's face.

Claude did not run, or make any undue haste, but he coolly and boldly sallied out into the night air.

The footpad was right enough in saying that the gipsies encompassed the hut, for the moment Claude made his appearance he was seen by the light of the blazing thatch, and a dozen voices cried—

"Down with him! Down with him!"

"My child! my child! Where is my child?" shouted the old woman.
"He will kill her!"

"I have him!" said a man, darting forward; but in a moment he lay prostrate upon the heath with one blow of the stick that Claude carried.

"Take that," said a voice; and the sharp report of a pistol immediately sounded. The ball went through Claude's hat about a couple of inches only clear of his forehead. He saw by the flash the gipsy who fired it, and in an instant he returned the shot; and after a spring into the air, and a shriek, down went the gipsy dead upon the heath!

The wild yell that upon this arose from every throat was really something awful to hear, and might have appalled many a stout heart; but Claude kept the gipsies yet at bay, although, now that matters had got so serious, he did not attempt to advance. He well knew that the pistol shots would have the effect of bringing his friends to the spot, and he was, therefore, content to wait until they should arrive, before he attempted anything else.

The footpad was close behind him, and he whispered—

"Blood has been shed now, and they will murder us!"

"Oh, no—no. Not at all."

"They will—indeed they will. Why do you not try to rush through them? Throw down the girl, and make one bold push for your own safety, Claude—I implore you to do so."

"All is well. Do you hear that?"

The footpad listened, and the sound of horses' hoofs came plainly upon his ears, patting the heath with a rapidity of sound that showed they were rapidly approaching the spot of the contest.

"Ah," he said, "I had forgot that you told me you had friends at hand. Why did you not summon them sooner?"

"Blood! blood!" cried the gipsies; and by the light of the now nearly expiring thatch, Duval could see that almost every one of them was armed with a knife. They were evidently collecting in a strong body, with the intention of making a rush at Claude and the footpad.

On came the horsemen, and they were close at hand before the gipsies, in the state of excitement in which they were, heard anything of their approach; and when they did, a momentary feeling of consternation induced them to pause. That moment was everything to Claude, for during it Jack and Brereton and the young farmer rode up.

"Where are you?" cried Jack. "Is all right?"

"Yes, all right," said Claude; "only these gentlemen think of murdering me, that's all."

"We will be in at the death," cried Jack, "at any rate, I rather think, Claude."

In an instant the three horsemen dashed through the throng of gipsies, and reached the side of Claude, having upset some half dozen of the more violent of the gang in their way.

"My horse?" cried Claude. "Is he with you?"

"Yes. Here," said Jack; "I have him by the bridle."

"That's right, Jack. Will you take care of this young lady? she is an old acquaintance of yours."

"Who is it—Lucy?"

"Yes."

"Give her to me," said Jack; "I'll hold her tight enough. I have a lively recollection that she used to have some little peculiarities of disposition that she called a temper."

"And she has them still, Jack. But she has fainted, so she will give you no trouble. All's right now. Ah, pop away!"

As Claude mounted another pistol was fired at the party; but although the bullet must have come right among them, it did not seem to have done any damage to them.

"Now," said Claude, "one charge with vigour will carry us through this mob of desperadoes, and you must not be at all particular where your horses tread, or whose toes come under their hoofs, for they will use their knives against the animals if they can."

"And what's to become of me?" said a doleful voice.

"Really, my friend," said Claude, "I hope you will forgive me for forgetting you for a moment. Get up behind me. My horse will carry double fare as far as we want to go, at any rate."

The footpad was thankful enough to scramble up behind Claude Duval, and then the whole party was ready; and what had been said and done during the time that they were getting ready had not occupied one quarter of the time that we have been compelled to take in the telling of it.

"Charge!" cried Claude.

Every one put his horse to a gallop, and as they each had rather heavy riding-whips, and Claude still retained possession of the hedge stake, they did not make much of the foe that only made a straggling attempt to oppose them. In the course of half-a-dozen seconds they were quite through the throng of gipsies, leaving some half-dozen of them sprawling upon the heath.

"On—on," cried Claude. "Follow me."

He took the lead, and rather to the surprise of the friends who were with him, he did not take his way to the farm-house, whither they had naturally enough concluded he would go first; but he galloped across the common in quite an opposite direction, keeping on at such a pace that none of them could ask him a question as to where he was going to.

He did not continue this speed for long though, and then Jack called out to him—

"Claude, where are you going? This is not the route to the farm."

"No," said Claude, "but that is the last place to which I should think of taking this girl to, Jack. Our friends there have quite enough trouble upon our account as it is."

"Do not think of that as a reason," cried the young farmer. "We never think anything a trouble, Claude, that we do for you; so that is of no sort of consequence. If you think proper to bring her to the farm, do so."

"No," said Claude; "it is certainly impossible that you could be always on the watch to prevent her from escaping from you, or perpetrating some mischief that would be worse still. I propose placing her in a private Lunatic Asylum, of which I know something, and where they will take her if they are well paid, and ask no questions."

"But she may talk?"

"Oh, yes, and they may listen, but what she says will have about as much effect upon those who will listen to her, as though she talked to the trees, or to the grass in the meadows. Has she moved, Jack?"

"No."

"Indeed! I begin to feel a little uneasy about this long swoon that she has fallen into. Can any of you get a light?"

"Yes, I can," said the young farmer; "and I have a small lantern hanging by my saddle, if it has not been knocked away in that squabble with the gipsies. No, here it is."

"Let us pause a moment by these trees," said Claude, "and see, if we can, what is the matter with her. I have half a suspicion now that she is only shamming a faint, for these sort of insensibilities seldom last so long as this."

They were tolerably clear of the heath, and upon the verge of a rather dense cluster of tall trees, among which they now quietly walked their horses, and Duval and the young farmer alighted. The latter, after some trouble, succeeded in lighting his lantern, which was a small hand one, with a powerful magnifying-glass, and a good reflector.

"Now," said Claude, "we will see what is the matter with this rather violent piece of goods."

As he spoke he lifted Lucy off Jack's horse, and kneeling upon one knee, he supported her upon the other.

"Bring the lantern close," he said.

"Here it is," said the young farmer. "Won't she open her eyes?"

"Good God!" said Claude.

"What is it—what is it?" they all cried.

"Poor girl, she will never open her eyes again. A pistol bullet has gone through the very centre of her forehead, and she is stone dead!"

CHAPTER LXXXI.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that had happened to deprive the little party among the trees of much sympathy with such a personage as Lucy, they could not help feeling something of a shock upon finding that she was really dead.

For some few moments not one word was uttered by any one, and as they all, by the light of the little lantern that the young farmer had with him, gazed upon the lifeless face, no doubt each was busy with his own peculiar reflections upon the scene.

"Thank God," said Claude, breaking the silence, "that no one here present is answerable for this death."

"No one," said Jack.

The footpad stepped forward, and with his hands clasped, he looked down at the corpse. One tear fell from his eyes, and with a deep sigh, he said—

"So this is the end. Poor girl, I don't know now if all thy passion about Duval was real or affected; but whichever it was, you have paid the penalty of it. You are gone now."

"Yes," said Claude, "and let all her faults go with her. Let us, if we say anything of her now, poor girl, say that she was wrong-headed but not wrong-hearted. It matters not now if she were only playing a part, or if she really felt all that she said and did. She is gone."

"Yes gone," added the footpad. "Peace go with her. I never thought until this moment——"

"What?" said Claude.

"That I cared for her a jot!"

As he said these words, so few, and yet so expressive of his feeling for the dead, he turned sadly away. Claude walked after him, and touching him lightly on the shoulder, he said—"Stop."

The footpad turned round hastily.

"There is something yet to be done, my friend," said Claude.

"What? Can you restore her to life again?"

"No, but we can pay proper respect to the dead. Here, in the open country, far away from the fetid soil of the crowded churchyard, let us lay her to rest. We will bury her, my friend."

The footpad grasped Claude's hand, but he said nothing. That pressure was sufficient, and they then walked back slowly together to the spot where Lucy lay, with Jack and the young farmer looking at her.

"We must bury her," said Claude. "At least, at our hands her remains want so much attention. Here amid the trees, where the free air of Heaven will blow over her grave, we will bury her."

"Yes," said Jack. "That is a job I will help at, with all my heart, Claude. Poor girl, she has my pity, and yet she has come to a quieter end than probably any of us will. Only look at her face, Claude; she just seems sleeping calmly and pleasantly."

"It is so, Jack."

"How is it possible," said the young farmer, "that we can bury her? We cannot dig a grave with our nails."

"That is indeed an obstacle," said Jack.

"And yet," said the footpad, "buried she must be, poor thing. If it take me a whole day to scoop a grave for her with a hedge-stake, I will do it. It is my duty not to desert even her corpse, whatever you may all think proper to do."

He spoke in a tone of voice that was harsh with hardly suppressed groans. Claude laid his hand upon his arm, and spoke gently.

"Hush, my friend, hush. If we speak of difficulties, it is only that we may devise means to overcome them. Do not fancy that we are going to abandon our object. It will be done, let the difficulties be what they may."

"Forgive me for a brief impatience."

"It needs no excuse, Jack; can you think of any mode of operation in this emergency?"

"Yes," said Jack. "I think I can go to our friend's farm here, in less than half an hour, and bring back a couple of spades."

"Ah!" said the young farmer, "I did not think of that; I will go, and as I know exactly where to lay my hands upon what I want, I shall be able to do it quicker, and likewise to give no alarm to the family. Shall I go at once on this errand, Claude?"

"You will please me much, my friend, by doing so."

The young farmer did not wait another moment, but availing himself of the loan of Jack's horse, which was accustomed to a sharp run now and then, he set off across the fields at a pace that promised very soon to bring him to his destination.

Nothing of any moment passed during the absence of the young farmer, and he returned in much less time than any one could have supposed it possible for him to do. He brought with him two spades, and as he dismounted, he said—

"I got the spades from an outhouse we have in the garden, and so had no occasion to go near the house."

"Then no one knows you have been there?" suggested Claude.

"No one."

Claude nodded as though he would have said—

"I am glad of that," and then in a clear voice, he said—

"At this juncture, my friends, let me ask if any of you feel any repugnance to promising to keep this affair a profound secret?"

"None," said the footpad. "I feel, Duval, that this is a question that is solely addressed to me, and I promise that not one word of to-night's proceedings will ever pass my lips."

"I thank you," said Claude, "and I tell you frankly my reason for being pleased at such a promise. It would much vex Cicely, my wife, to hear of it."

"No doubt. It shall be kept secret."

The young farmer took one of the spades, and the footpad took the other; but Claude, throwing off his coat, took it from him, saying—

"No, my friend, let me do this last service for the poor girl. You can be a spectator and a mourner, and should not be asked to work at this sad task."

The footpad surrendered the spade. Indeed his hands shook so, that if he had attempted to persevere in the use of it, it was quite clear that he would have made but very small progress indeed with it, while Claude, with his strength and perseverance, was able, effectually, to aid the young farmer, who had already systematically begun the work.

They chose a spot beneath a large sycamore tree, whose spreading branches stretched far and wide on all sides, and particularly to the south, and then they marked out the grave of the wayward spirit that had brought death upon itself.

As they worked, the gray light of the dawn began slowly to make its appearance, and they extinguished the little lantern, by the aid of which they had first begun their labours. The moment they put that out, the

coming daylight was much more perceptible to them all, and they paused a moment to look at it.

"We must get our work over soon," said Claude, "or the daylight will surprise us."

"Yes," said Jack, "it is coming fast. There—there is a sudden gleam of light from the east. Do you see it among the trees?"

"Yes, and the grave is finished," said Claude.

They had dug about five feet into the earth, and now the young farmer and Claude having got out of the grave, they all carefully and slowly lifted the body and placed it in its last resting place.

"My large cloak, Jack," said Claude.

"Yes, it is here," said Jack.

Claude took it and laid it four times doubled over the corpse, and then they replaced the mould, and as the young farmer had carefully laid aside the turf from the surface, he relaid it again, so that but very slight traces of any interference with the ground was left. The spare mould they scattered far and wide among the trees; but before the work was quite finished the farmer approached the footpad, and taking a little volume from his pocket, he said—

"I brought you this. Would you like to use it?"

It was a book of Common Prayer, and, of course, contained the service for the dead.

"Yes—yes," he said, eagerly; "yes. I thank you for this. Indeed, I thank you for this."

He advanced to the side of the grave, and holding the book so that the best rays of the gray light that was irradiating the east fell upon it, he read the service of the dead in a solemn and affecting voice. All present stood uncovered, and listening to it with quiet composure; and when the last words were spoken, and the book was closed, it dropped from the hands of the footpad.

"I shall leave England now," he said.

"Do you think you will be happier elsewhere?" said Claude.

"Yes, I am sure I shall. Besides, I——"

What the footpad was going to add, was suddenly drowned in the echoes of a loud yell, that came from some unseen persons in the immediate vicinity among the trees.

So entirely unexpected, and so startling was this sudden outcry, that even Claude, with all his presence of mind—and few could equal him in that grand particular—was startled. He recovered, however, in a moment, and cried out—

"The horses, Jack! See to the safety of the horses!"

"The gipsies are upon us!" said the footpad.

The words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the old hag, who claimed, probably upon rather dubious grounds, to be the mother of Lucy, rushed forward from among the trees, with a knife in her hand. She made directly towards Claude, exclaiming—

"Thus am I avenged!"

Had she made a similar demonstration against any other one of the party, it is likely enough she might have succeeded in doing what she wished; but Claude stood as firm as a rock, and when she darted towards him, he caught the wrist of the arm she had raised against him, and with the other hand flung her some distance off, and she rolled right over the newly covered up grave of Lucy.

"Let her be," cried Claude. "She is mad, I do think."

It would appear that the gipsies had relied upon the old hag being successful in taking the life of Claude; for they had not followed up this sudden yell, or war cry, by any attack. No doubt, that was merely for the purpose of petrifying the little party with sudden fright, so that the old woman might, before the sudden surprise had ceased, plunge the knife into Claude's heart.

If this had succeeded, it is very probable that the rest of the party would have found it difficult to resist an impetuous attack from the gipsies; but the failure of the hag made all the difference.

There was quite sufficient daylight now for the gipsies to see perfectly well what had happened, and how completely the hag had failed in her murderous intent. They just hesitated long enough to enable those whom they came to attack to get thoroughly upon their guard.

"Do not run," cried Claude. "Stay and face them. They are arrant cowards at the best of times. I know them well."

The most available weapon he could use in a close encounter with the gipsies, so as to ward off their knives, which were really dangerous, was the spade with which he had assisted the young farmer to dig Lucy's grave; and that in the hands of such a man as Claude Duval was, in truth, a most formidable implement of offence as well as of defence.

The young farmer had the other spade. Jack held a very heavily loaded riding-whip in both hands, one blow from which he well knew was enough to knock down any man. Mark Brereton had a sword by his side, which he now drew and put himself upon the defensive; so that our party, although small, was well prepared.

They had not, however, very long to wait, before, with a wild scream of rage, about thirty of the most desperate-looking fellows of the gipsy race that could well be conceived, made their appearance from among the trees, and tried, by one sudden rush, to overcome all opposition, and crush their foes.

This was not so easily done, however. Our friends stood shoulder to shoulder in a small half circle, and well they sustained the sudden shock of the gipsies' assault. Claude, with his spade, knocked no less than four of them prostrate in the course of as many moments. Two others fell before the young farmer, and the heavy riding-whip, wielded by Jack, did great execution.

One athletic fellow, who made a dash at Mr. Brereton, was run right through the body in a moment, and Brereton had to put up his foot to throw him off his sword.

This reception certainly staggered the gipsy crew; and seeing more than a third of their number put *hors de combat* in about a minute and a half, they wavered. One voice then cried out—

"Forward! kill them—they are exhausted now—kill them all! They have murdered the girl! Blood for blood!"

The sound of that voice seemed to animate the gipsies; and collecting all their strength and all their ferocity, they made another dash at the little party; but as our friends had not received any injury whatever worth the mentioning, and none at all that they felt at the moment, they stood firm, and the result of this second attack of the gipsy crew was something very similar to the first. Some half-dozen more fell to the ground, either dead or totally insensible from serious hurts.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

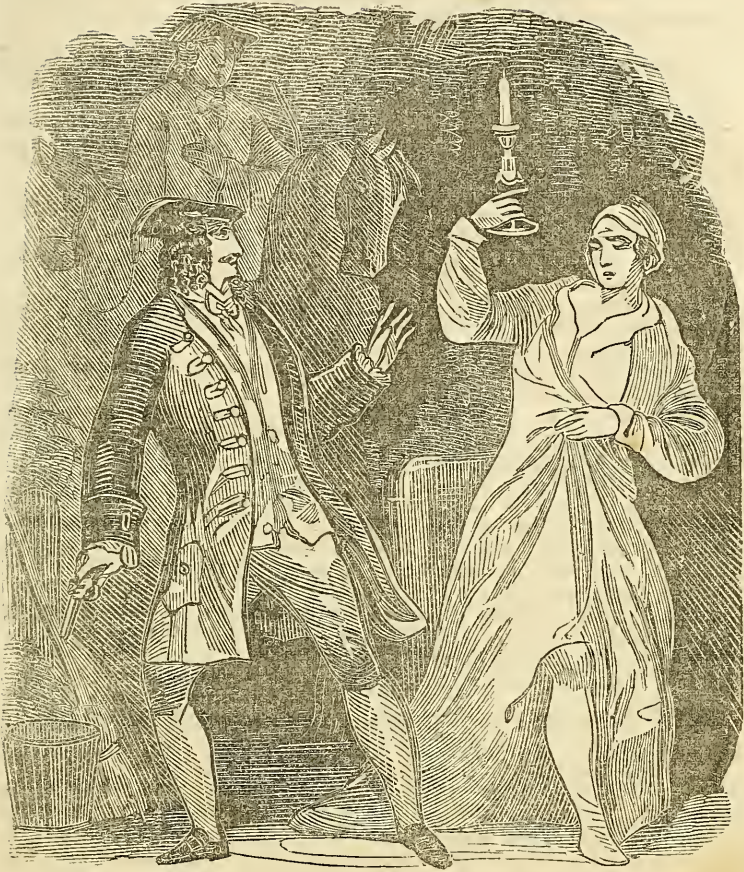
AFTER this second check, the gipsies were by far too much reduced in number to hazard a third attack. With a yell of rage and disappointment, they set off in full retreat among the trees; and in the space of a moment or two not one was to be seen, except such as lay upon the ground at the feet of their victors.

"This is pleasant!" cried Claude.

"Very," said Jack.

"Is anybody hurt of us?"

"All right," cried the young farmer and Mark Brereton.



Claude and Jack watching the Landlord of the Inn in his sleep.

In a moment, then, the footpad answered—

“A slight scratch,” he said, as he appeared staunching the blood that flowed from a knife-wound in his arm. “A slight scratch, that is all.”

“How did you get it?” said Claude.

“Why, I saw that you all had enough to do in front, so, knowing well what the gipsies are, I kept an eye on one man, and was rewarded by seeing a fellow stealing along, with a knife in his hand, to attack you all behind. I closed with him, and he gave me this bit of a scratch, that’s all.”

“And where is he?”

“Lying over there. It strikes me his head had two or three hard knocks against that bit of root of the chesnut there, that sticks out of the ground so singularly, and is as hard as iron.”

“It strikes me so too,” said Jack, who stepped for a moment over to where the man was lying. “Nobody can deny that the fellow had some brains.”

“How do you mean, Jack?” said Claude.

“Why, they are lying principally on the ground by his side.”

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," said the footpad. "He would be rather troublesome, so I was forced, in a manner of speaking, to do the best I could with him."

"Where is the old woman?" said Claude.

"Dead, I think," said Brereton, as he wiped his sword in the grass. "She is lying on the grave here, quite gone; I think."

"Nobody hurt her," said Claude. "I was careful only to throw her; and a fall upon the green sod here could not kill her. If she be dead, passion has more to do with it than violence."

As he spoke, he approached the grave upon which the old hag lay, in exactly the attitude she had fallen when Claude cast her from him. He stooped slightly over her, saying—

"Foolish woman, we have no animosity against you. If you live, go and join your people in peace, so far as we are concerned."

The old woman moved slightly.

"Oh, she is all right," cried Claude.

"You will let me go?" she said, faintly.

Certainly. Get up and be off with you. I can assure you we are none of us solicitous of your very agreeable company."

"Be careful of her, Claude," cried the footpad, who, with the assistance of Jack, was binding a handkerchief round his wounded arm. "Be careful of her. She has as many tricks as an old fox."

"Thank you," said Claude.

He only slightly turned his head towards the footpad to say these two words, and on the moment, seeing her opportunity, the hag was on her knees in a moment and made a stab at his breast with the knife which she had, despite her tumble, retained, and cunningly hidden.

"Now I am avenged!" she cried.

The knife broke off short by the hilt against Claude's breast, as though it had been made of iron. In another moment Mark Brereton had seized the old woman round the waist, and held her tight.

"How is this, Claude?" he said. "Do you wear armour?"

"Armour?"

"Yes. The knife broke off your breast as it would off a good cuirass. It has saved you."

"But I have no cuirass. I never thought of such a thing."

He hastily tore open his vest as he spoke, and then, in a moment, it was seen what had saved him. The point of the knife had happened to come precisely against a rather massive gold watch that Claude had in his pocket, and so he had been effectually saved. There was a clear indentation in the outside case of the watch; and as he held it up, he said—

"This is a lucky escape, indeed, my friends. This watch has saved my life, and I will never part with it."

"You ought not," said Brereton; "but, in the meantime, pray tell me what I am to do with this mad old woman."

"I'll soon relieve you of her!" cried Jack.

Taking from his pocket a stout cord, Jack now, after some little difficulty, tied the old woman's wrists together.

"Now," he said, "I shall have the pleasure, madam, of effectually preventing you from being mischievous for some time to come, by making you fast to one of these trees."

"My bitterest malediction light upon you all!" cried the hag, while her eyes flashed with passion.

"Eave away," said Jack, "We like to hear it. Besides, it will keep you out of more mischief. Only remember, that your cursing us has just about as much effect as if by your maledictions, you strove to uproot one of these old trees."

"Revenge!—I will have my revenge!"

"Doubtless you will, when you can."

Despite all her struggles—and, at times, they were rather furious—Jack tied her fast to a tree, and there he left her to rave or swear at her leisure.

"What is to be done?" said Brereton to Claude.

"Nothing, that I know of," he said; "but as a matter of choice, now, to leave this place. All that has happened here, disagreeable as it is, has only been a matter of force with us. We did not choose it, and so we cannot help it. Let us all go to the farm, and from there we can separate as our different routes and inclinations may lead us. Jack and I are for the road again."

"And so am I," said the footpad, "until, by some lucky chance, I can get hold of enough to take me from England."

Jack shook his head.

"You won't go, my friend," he said. "We tried it once. There is a destiny in these things."

"Think you so?"

"I am sure of it. But help me with the horses here. It is something more than a lucky thing that the gipsies did not find out where we had stowed them, or we should have had to walk, for a certainty, from this place."

"Yes," said the footpad. "I know them well. They would have gloried in slaughtering them."

Fortunately, as Jack said, the cattle had been, while the grave was being dug, placed in a secure position among the trees; and now they were brought out quite fresh and ready for a good start.

"I shall never forget this place as long as I live," said Claude. "This affair will make a pretty noise when it comes to be known."

"I don't think," said the footpad, "it will ever be known. Of course, the dead bodies will be found; but as they are all gipsies, it will be considered that they have had some fracas among themselves, and so a number of them have come by death, and everybody with a poultry yard will rejoice accordingly."

"Then," said Claude, as they all rode off, "you think they will not themselves—I mean these who escaped—say anything about it?"

"Not one word."

"It is better that they should not."

"But you, Claude, and all of us, will be marked men by the gipsy tribe; and if ever they have an opportunity of being revenged upon us, you may depend that they will."

"Naturally enough," said Claude.

"Do you hear," said Jack, "what a racket that old woman makes, swearing and cursing us at such a rate?"

"Yes," said Claude, "I hear her. She ought to be less dangerous upon that account some other time."

"Not a whit," said the footpad. "If she don't follow you up, Claude Duval, and yet try to place a knife-blade in your heart, it will be simply because her failures will take a superstitious hold of her, and she will fancy that you are supernaturally protected—that is the only feeling that will keep her quiet."

"And do you think it a likely one to come over her?"

"I do."

"Well, I must say, I sincerely hope it may. A man I really don't mind how many tussles I have with, but with such an antagonist as a viperous old woman, it is one of the most difficult things in the world to know what to do."

More than once they at intervals paused to glance behind them, to see if they could notice any appearance of the gipsies; but all was quiet, and they soon reached the outskirts of the farm.

Claude rode up to the young farmer, and said—

"You are pretty certain that no one knew of your visit to the farm for the two spades?"

"My brother only saw me, and him I cautioned to say nothing. While I was getting the spades, he fetched me the prayer-book, which, it appeared, your friend was well pleased to have."

"Just so. I would not have the mind and the peace of Cicely disturbed by this adventure on any account."

"There is no occasion."

"Not the least; and I am extremely obliged to you, for the discretion you have showed in the matter."

"Do not mention that. If I or any of my family can, by any possible means, do you a service, you know what great pleasure it gives us."

"Yes, I do know it, and I feel grateful accordingly; but here we are at home. I always call this house home, for such is the character of the feeling that comes over me when I reach its threshold."

"And there is Cicely!"

"Cicely! So early up?"

"Ah! yes, Duval. She, doubtless, has been a little alarmed, at your protracted absence. I warrant she left her chamber as soon as daylight enabled her to see her way."

"I should not wonder. Cicely—Cicely!"

Cicely ran across the farm-yard to the little gate at which they had all halted.

"Ah, you are safe?" she said.

"Safe!" said Claude, quietly. "Yes, to be sure, Cicely. How could we be otherwise? We have not been in more than common danger."

"What do you call common danger, Claude?"

"Why, have you not heard that

" 'Tis dangerous to eat, to drink, to sleep,
To walk?"

"Yes, Claude; but your dangers, I am assured, are generally of a much more stringent character."

"And who assures you, Cicely, of that?"

"My own heart, Claude."

This little dialogue took place between Claude and Cicely as they walked together up the avenue of the garden towards the house, for they had left the farm-yard, and had taken a slight round to the homestead.

"You will now remain for a time?" said Cicely.

"Yes, for a time."

"How long, Claude? I like not the tone in which you say 'for a time.' You will stay all day?"

"Nay, dear Cicely, that I cannot. I can but breakfast, and then be off; but if it be at all possible for me to return by about midnight, I will do so. Do not, however, construe this hope of mine into a positive promise."

"I must."

"Nay, do not; for I cannot tell what may detain me. You do not know what adventures befall me at times; and were I to tell you all——"

"Why do you pause?"

"Because I was going to say, were I to tell you all, you would not be able to sleep so soundly a-nights, as, in truth, I hope you do, and wish you to do. Besides, if I were to make positive promises about being here at certain hours, without leaving myself the smallest latitude of action, if anything occurred that I came not, you would picture to yourself the worst that could happen, when, perhaps, it was very far, indeed, from the truth."

"You are right in that, Claude."

"I feel that I am. Let me then go without a promise, and come when I can."

Cicely's reason told her, that this was by far the best arrangement that could be made; and after a few moments, she acquiesced in it completely.

They all sat down to an ample breakfast at the farm-house, and at its conclusion, Claude and Jack again sought their steeds, and mounting, took to the road.

They struck off to the high road to Guilford, at a gentle trot across the meadows.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

"JACK," said Claude. "How do you feel after all this affair of Lucy's?"

"Will you let me answer your question by another, Claude?"

"It is an Irish way of answering a question, Jack; but say on. Let us have it."

"Then, what is your reason for asking me?"

"Why, Jack, you are turning a complete Jesuit. What reason could I possibly have, my friend, for asking you, but to obtain information?"

"Then, Claude, I am quite satisfied; I know that her death hangs heavily at your heart; but I do not think it ought to do so. You had literally nothing to do with it; and although she had threatened abundance of harm to Cicely, you never for one moment dreamt of any to her."

"That is strictly true, Jack."

"Well, she, in the frenzy of her evil passions, called up the gipsies to her aid, and she herself fell a victim to the evil spirit she had summoned to do her service, as you will generally find most people do."

"Yes," said Claude, mournfully, "the pistol-shot which killed her, certainly came from one of the gipsies."

"And it was aimed at you, Claude."

"That there can be no doubt of. Well, Jack, we cannot recall the past, and I will endeavour to forget the fate of that poor creature. Ill-directed passion brought her to her end, and I cannot help thinking that she had some evil adviser who urged her on to her destruction."

"I have thought so myself," said Jack, "for at times, when she seemed to be most violent, her passion did not seem to me to be so natural as it might have been."

"The same idea crossed me, Jack, more than once during the fray. But hush! I hear the rapid sound of a horse's hoofs. Some one approaches in a hurry."

"They do indeed; and yet it is, by the sound, a straggling bad sort of gallop."

"Where are we?" said Claude, glancing around him.

"What, Claude, don't you recognize the road? It is the old Oxford-road, and we are about eight miles from London. Don't you know it now?"

"Oh, yes, most assuredly I do. But I should like to stop this fellow who is coming along at such a rate, and know what puts him to speed. Wait where you are a moment, Jack, and I will take the middle of the road. I don't like people to go by me in a great hurry, and I know nothing about it."

Jack laughed, and Claude rode out into the centre of the thoroughfare, which was, just at that spot, not very wide, so that when the horseman came up, he found it would have been rather a difficult thing to pass on.

"Out of my way, sir," he cried; "I am at speed."

"Hold!" shouted Claude. "As an officer of police, I insist upon knowing who you are and where you are going? They say that the celebrated Gentleman Jack the highwayman is upon this road, and how do I know but you may be he?"

Upon this the horseman pulled up at once.

"Bless your heart," he said, "me a highwayman? Only look at me, and then ask yourself if I have any resemblance to one."

"I don't know that. What do you make yourself out to be, my friend, and where are you going?"

"My name, sir, is Brown. I am a clerk to a respectable solicitor in Oxford, and I am going to Bow-street."

"Humph! what about?"

"Why, you must know that the notorious Dick Turpin has been apprehended at the Pig and Tinder-Box in Oxford, while he was in bed, and we think of hanging him for a highway-robbery, outside that city, committed only three days ago. The Oxford Assizes are on, only it was thought as he was such a notorious criminal, the Attorney-general might come down by order of the Treasury to conduct the prosecution."

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes, sir. And now you know all about it. Of course, I very sincerely hope he will be hung, as no doubt you do; so I beg that you will not impede me any longer, sir."

"Certainly not—go on. Good day."

"Good day, sir. You are a very active officer, indeed, and about the stupidest fellow I ever met with," added the lawyer's clerk to himself as he rode on, for he had quite mistaken Claude's look of concern, when he heard of Dick Turpin's peril, to stupidity and a difficulty of comprehension.

The moment the clerk was out of sight, Claude rode to where Jack was waiting, and told him what had passed.

"Why didn't you stop him?" said Jack.

"Because it would have done no good. We should not have liked killing him, and if we had dismounted him, and started off his horse, he could have walked to London in a couple of hours. I did think of stopping him, but upon consideration I did not see that it would do the smallest good to Dick Turpin; so I abandoned the idea of it."

"You are right, Claude."

"But I am not going to abandon Dick, for all that. What say you to a trot to Oxford, Jack?"

"With all my heart, if you think you can do any good; and if you don't think so, we may as well go, as something may turn up when we get there."

"Jack, I thank you for those words; they show a proper spirit. So let us be off at once. Our horses are fully equal to the job; and we shall be there in six hours from hence, I think, or thereabouts."

"Easy," said Jack.

They did not pause another moment, but turning their horses' heads in the required direction, off they went at a good pace, although not a distressing one, for knowing the distance that lay before them, they were too judicious to tax their steeds for the first twenty miles, to the peril of seeing them perform the rest of the journey with difficulty.

"How are you off for money, Claude?" said Jack, when they were in a lonely part of the road, after having ridden twelve miles or so.

"Pretty well. I think I have somewhere about eighty pounds by me."

"And I have more."

"More, Jack?"

"Yes; you forget that you frequently lend me sums of money, saying, 'Take this, Jack,' or 'Mind this for a rainy day, Jack,' or something of that sort; but I take care of it all; so if cash will do Dick any good, I think we shall have plenty. I speak because we should not allow ourselves to lose any time by crying 'stand and deliver!' to any one upon the road."

"No, Jack, we will let the world go free for once in a way. Oxford is our destination, and we will not turn out of our route or stay upon it longer than will be necessary to give our horses bait a little, on any account."

"Very good, Claude, I think that is the right course."

After completing the first twenty miles, they halted for a whole hour, during which they refreshed themselves and their horses, letting the latter have a careful grooming, and a light feed, after which they were nearly as fresh as when they had first started in the morning.

"I want to do all the rest of the distance now," said Claude, "without a halt of more than ten minutes or so, once or twice."

"That we can do, easily. I should advise that after the next five miles we give the horses a pot of old ale each, and then I don't think they will flag if we were to ride right through to Oxford."

"It shall be done, Jack."

They halted at a pretty little road-side inn, to give the horses the ale, and just as they had finished drinking it, a corpulent man came to the door of the inn with an immense bell-shaped barrelled blunderbuss in his hands, and pointing it full upon Claude, he called out—

"Stop, both of you—I know you. You stopped me once when I was in my gig, and took away one hundred and twenty pounds from me. You know you did. You are Duval, and the other rogue I don't know."

"Well," said Claude, "I'll tell you. They call him Blaze-away, and that's what I'm waiting for you to do, you stupid old pump. What's the use of that blunderbuss to you?"

"I'll soon let you know what use it is of, if you don't stop. Quick, Jem! Bob! Get a couple of ropes to tie up these two highwaymen with. I will take them both to London."

"Well," said Claude, "I'm sorry that I have not a blunderbuss to meet you with. If I had, we could make a regular duel with them both; but here is a little pop-gun in the shape of a pistol which will do."

The moment Claude produced a pistol, the corpulent man cried—

"All right, only I like to have the first fire; so here goes."

"As he spoke, he pulled the trigger of the blunderbuss, when, instead of discharging itself in the proper manner, it burst with a stunning report; and the last Claude and Jack saw of the corpulent man, were his heels in the air, as he lay upon his back in the passage of the inn.

"Come on, Jack," said Claude, "I expected some such an end to this adventure. Those old blunderbusses are really never to be depended upon."

"Really, Claude, you take things remarkably easy. What if it had gone off all right and riddled you with bullets?"

"I don't think, Jack, that it's my fate to be popped off in such a way. I have stood fire so often and never come to much hurt, that I seem now to have a blind confidence in my good fortune. It may fail me some day, though, for all that, and when it does, I shall not complain. Push on Jack."

They went on at a good pace, and the effect of the ale they had given to their horses was tolerably manifest, for they did not draw rein again until they reached an inn not above three quarters of a mile from Oxford.

"We will put up here, Jack," said Claude, "and no doubt we shall get all the news if we ask our landlord to join us in a bottle of wine."

"It's more than likely," said Jack.

The horses were put up and well attended to—Claude asked for a private room, and then desired that a couple of bottles of wine should be brought him, and the two best beds kept for them. An order, too, for supper was given, of quite an *ad libitum* character, so that the landlord thought two such guests were well worth waiting on himself.

We should have premised that Jack had doffed his groom's costume and wore rather a dashing suit of brown cloth. Claude still retained about his costume a rather clerical look, and it became him very well indeed.

After the wine was on the table, the landlord came into the room with many bows and smirks.

"I hope, gentlemen," he said, "the wine is to your liking?"

"Very good," said Claude. "Pray sit down and take a glass of it with us, landlord."

"Oh sir, you really do me too much honour."

The landlord, notwithstanding it was too much honour, drew a chair and sat down with his very kind and urbane guests, and after a few glasses of wine had been partaken of, Claude said in an easy off-handed manner—

"Is there any news stirring in Oxford?"

"Why, sir," said the landlord, "at assize time we have lots of news of

some sort or other ; but everything is now taken up with the capture of Dick Turpin the highwayman."

"What, the celebrated Turpin?"

"The very same, sir."

"Why you amaze me! I always thought that he was so very bold and determined a fellow, that he would hardly have been taken alive."

"So did I," said Jack.

"Very likely, gentlemen, very likely," said the landlord. Perhaps he would not, if they had not caught him in bed."

"Oh, that was it, was it?"

"Yes, they caught him in bed, gentlemen. But I hope you like this wine?"

"Very well, indeed. I think among us we may manage another bottle of it when these two are done; and in the meantime you will oblige us very much, landlord, by telling us how Turpin was captured, and by whom."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE landlord smiled his best smile, for it was not every day that such good customers came to his house.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I can tell you the whole particulars."

"And we should like to know, too," added Jack, "what specific offence they are going to try him for."

"That I can tell you likewise, gentlemen, as well as any man. It is for robbing the Provost of Magdalen College on this very road, and not two hundred yards from this house."

"Indeed?" said Jack.

"What assurance," said Claude.

"Worse than assurance," added the landlord, "for of course, gentlemen, you are aware that the Provost is a Doctor of Divinity."

"Exactly."

"Well, then, gentlemen, the Provost has a quiet little nag that he likes a ride upon every afternoon, and about four days ago he passed this door on his nag, but he did not come home on it."

"How so?"

"Why it appears that after he had got some distance past this house, he met Turpin on his horse, although, of course, the Provost did not know him from Adam. Up rides Turpin to him and says—

"Sir, can you tell me the exact time?"

"Well, the Provost did not much like his looks, but he took out his watch and told him.

"Does that watch keep good time?" said Turpin.

"Sir," said the Provost, who was rather proud of his watch, which was worth a hundred guineas, 'sir, it keeps better time than the clock of Magdalen College.'

"Oh, then," said Turpin, 'I will trouble you for it, as I often want to know the exact time. You see, sir, I am a highwayman, and have, in consequence, what people call a bad character. Now in this country, if you give a dog a bad name you had better hang him, and as I am often accused of crimes at places I never saw, your correct watch will be a very handy thing when I want to prove an *alibi*.'"

"How cool," said Jack.

"Very," said Claude.

"You may well say that, gentlemen. Well, upon this, he took the watch from the Provost, and besides that, he made him give up his purse containing twenty pounds, and then he forced him to dismount from his nag and

started it off down the London Road, and because he did not dismount quick enough, Turpin threw the reverend doctor's hat and wig into a ditch."

"Upon my word," said Claude, "that was too bad."

"Very much too bad," said Jack.

"You may well say that, gentlemen. The poor Provost had to come here to this house on foot, and send for a chaise to Oxford, to take him home; and when he got to the college, he offered a hundred pounds reward to any one who would apprehend the highwayman who had robbed him, and he gave a good description of him, so that the police of Oxford all said it could be no other than Dick Turpin. But still he would have got clear off if he had only chosen to ride away, but instead of that he came into Oxford and put up at the Three Kings Inn, and the landlord of it gave notice to the officers, and they caught him in bed and had him handcuffed before he was very well awake to what was going on."

"Ah," said Claude, "I understand how it was then. You may depend that if he had not been caught napping in such a way, Dick Turpin would have given them some trouble."

"Not a doubt of it, sir."

"And is he to be tried?"

"Why, yes, sir. The assizes were on, so he was committed at once, and as there is always a second gaol delivery during the assizes, he will no doubt be comfortably hung, for they say that the big-wigs, meaning the judges, sir, are quite resolved to get rid of him."

"But will they give him a fair trial?"

"Oh, yes, gentlemen. Everything will be regular enough; but you see it's a very clear case, indeed; and there ain't the shadow of a chance for him. He will be hung, and between you and me, gentlemen, he will be a good riddance, for those sort of gentry make the roads unsafe, and do the Inns a deal of harm. Now there's another something like him; I mean Claude Duval. They tell me that on the London side of Uxbridge, he does just what he likes."

"Is that possible?"

"It is, indeed, sir. I am credibly informed of it, I assure you, on the most competent authority."

"Well," said Jack, "if Duval ever stops me, he shall find out that he has made a mistake."

"Oh, but, sir, he has another ruffian with him."

"Has he?" said Claude. "Then if that other ruffian ever stops me, he shall find out that it shall not be for nothing."

"Well, gentlemen, I only wish you two could met them both."

"I fear that is not likely," said Claude. "But where is Dick Turpin confined now, landlord?"

"In the jail, and he is tolerably safe. They had him in the spinning house for a time, but they did not think that safe enough. He won't get away, you may depend upon it."

"That's a comfort," said Claude, "at all events. We are very much obliged to you, landlord, for these particulars. We will leave our horses here and take a walk into the city, and then come back to rest, for we are rather tired."

"Very good—very good gentlemen. The best beds shall be at your service, and better I am sure are not to be found in the whole country, to say nothing of the city."

"Thank you," said Jack. "We shall no doubt be very well satisfied."

They then rose, having made a highly favourable impression upon the Innkeeper, and on foot they walked into Oxford. They soon found upon reaching that place that the sole topic of conversation was of the apprehension of Dick Turpin; and after a consultation between themselves, Claude said—

"There is one thing, Jack, that we must make up our minds to, let the

risks be what they may; that is, to save Dick. I am quite resolved to encounter any difficulty rather than let him perish."

"And I likewise," said Jack.

"Very good. From all we can hear of the old jail, it is a crazy enough structure, and if Dick were not heavily ironed, I have not the least doubt but that he would make his escape from it."

"To be sure he would, Claude. But cannot we, who are not ironed at all, contrive to get at him in some sort of way?"

"You have anticipated my idea, Jack. There are two things, however, necessary to do before we could, with any chance of success, attempt Dick's rescue from the jail. One of them is to procure a plan of the prison, and the other is to ascertain in what part of it he is placed."

"Both rather difficult," said Jack.

"Probably so, but not impossible. There is an old work on the antiquities of Oxford, in which I know there is a plan of this jail, and what can be a more likely place to find such a work in, than in Oxford itself."

"Let's come then," said Jack, "to the best bookseller's in this place, and see if we can get it."

We need not particularise the interview of Claude and Jack with a smiling Oxford bookseller; suffice it to say, that without any difficulty they got the book they wanted, for which they had to pay two guineas, and then they both repaired to a private room in an hotel, and studied well the plan of the jail. They found that the cells of any strength were only six in number, and that they were numbered in regular order, and in a part of the prison called 'The Inner Keep.'

"That will do," said Jack.

"Yes, so far, Jack; and now we must find out some house of entertainment to which the officials of the prison are in the habit of going. There is always some such place near to every jail."

This latter object was much easier accomplished than even the former, and Jack and Claude were soon seated in the parlor of a public-house near the prison, with a glass of brandy-and-water before each of them. They trusted to their own natural acuteness in finding out the sort of person they wanted.

In the course of ten minutes a burly looking man came into the parlour and sat down next to Claude. He got Claude over any little difficulty in opening the conversation with him, by saying, as he rubbed his hands together—

"A nice day, sir, out of doors."

Those three words "out of doors" were quite sufficient to convince Claude that the man was one of the prison officials, and he said in a cool, assured tone, "Oh, yes, my friend. You are off duty, now, I suppose?"

"You mean at the jug? Oh, yes, I get half an hour three times a day, when I ain't on the outer lock."

Claude pushed his glass of brandy-and-water towards him, as he added—

"I hope you will keep Dick Turpin safe now you have got him."

The man took a long draught of the hot steaming liquid, before he answered, and then, with what he thought was a very knowing wink, he said—

"I believe you; catch weasels asleep? We have got him safe enough."

"But he is a desperate fellow."

"Let him be."

"And he will break out of prison if you don't mind."

"But we will mind. We have got him in number six, and if he gets out of that, I will give him leave."

"Number six?"

"Yes. In course, you don't know, but number six is in the inner-keep, and there he is as safe as ninepence; and besides, he's got half-a-hundred weight of irons on him, so you needn't be afeerd of his getting away. Ha! ha!"

"Well, that's satisfactory," said Claude, giving Jack a sly kick under the table.

"Very," said Jack.

"It's to be hoped they will hang him," added Claude, as he again pushed the glass to the man, and then as before, the turnkey took his drink before he replied; placing the empty glass upon the table, he said, as he drew a long breath—

"Hang him? of course. That's settled."

"But he ain't tried."

"No matter, it's settled. Thank you, for me, sir; I must be off now, my time is just upon up. If you stay in Oxford a few days longer, for I take it you are only visitors, you will see Dick Turpin tucked up."

"We shall certainly stay. Good evening to you."

"Good evening, and your servant, gentlemen."

The official personage who had made the revelation regarding Dick being in number six in the inner-keep, then took himself off, much to the relief of Jack and Claude, who now waited to consult with each other, as to what was to be done immediately regarding the preparation for attempting the rescue of Dick from the old prison.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

FROM the experience that our readers have had of Claude and his friend and companion Jack, it may be well supposed that in their cogitations concerning what was to be done for the rescue of Dick, they did not throw aside any possible plan that might suggest itself, on account of any dangers that might surround it.

On the contrary, it is highly probable that to those most adventurous spirits, danger was a kind of excitement, that was now in a manner essential to their existence, and there was one thing they felt convinced of, namely, that the most dangerous path was generally the most direct to any object.

"Well, Jack," said Claude. "What is your conclusion?"

"In good faith," said Jack, "I cannot come to one; but if I mistake not very much, Claude, you have."

"You are right."

"Then let me hear it, Claude, not that I may in any shape or way criticise it, but that I may be prepared to carry it out as far as my powers will let me. You are far more fertile in expedients than I am."

"I don't know that, Jack. But you must have observed that next door to the jail in which Dick is confined there is a glover's shop."

"Yes, Claude."

"Well, then, Jack, it strikes me that we must get admittance to the prison in some way through that house, after its inhabitants have retired to rest. It is something rather new to break into a prison, especially when such as you and I, Jack, are concerned in the affair; but I really think, for once in a way, we can manage it."

"No doubt of it, Claude."

"Then you do not think that there is anything extravagant in my proposal, Jack?"

"Very far from it. When one of our profession breaks out of a prison, he of course labours under every possible disadvantage, and such tools and implements as he requires for the purpose he has to get in with much risk and difficulty; but we being upon the outside, and perfectly free to possess ourselves of what means and appliances we like, may surely break in."

"I am glad, indeed, Jack, that you view it in that spirit. We will, from the plan of the prison we have got, make a careful sketch of our route to Dick's cell, and at midnight we will come into Oxford, and commence our enterprise."

"Good," said Jack. "I am willing. What shall we need in the way of tools and implements?"

"A couple of the best ropes we can get, each forty feet in length, some strong grappling hooks, and your picklocks, which you know how to use as well, Jack, as any man breathing, and I will take with me a small crow-bar of iron. Our pistols we will, of course, keep prepared, so that, I think, we may defy any accidents."

"I hope so, Claude."

"Then come along, and let us make our purchases, and after that we will go to our inn, and get our supper, and, then, if possible, we will get back to the town without our host knowing that we have left the inn at all."

"That, too, may be managed, Claude."

They both now left the public-house, where they had been so signally successful in getting the information they sought, and sallied out into the principal street of Oxford to purchase the various articles they wanted.

In such a place as Oxford they did not find much difficulty in suiting themselves with the ropes and the hooks. At a cutler's, too, Claude purchased two capitally-made small crow-bars, so that they repaired to the inn capitally provided, although, even under Jack's great coat, the rope was rather a bulky article.

They found that the landlord had got the supper for them that they had so liberally ordered, and having, to their great satisfaction, discussed it, they, under the plea of fatigue, retired very early to rest, or rather to their bedrooms, where they were supposed to be going to rest, but where rest they did not.

"It's all right," said Jack. "My window looks into the garden of the inn, and there is only a slight paling to cross to get into a lane that runs parallel with the High-street."

"That will do, Jack."

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and all the sounds had for the last half hour ceased in the inn, when Claude and Jack prepared themselves for their enterprise. They dressed themselves as compactly as they could, so as to leave as little straggling portions of apparel about them as possible, that might impede them in flight, or in climbing; and each winding round him one of the pieces of rope, to which they had firmly attached the grapples they had bought, they cautiously opened the window of Jack's bed-room.

"You have not forgotten your pick-locks, Jack?" whispered Claude.

"Oh, no—no. You have the crow-bars?"

"All right: and I think you looked to the priming of your pistols, and you have the file with you?"

"A couple of as sharp-biting files, Claude, as ever made war against fetters, I have about me. If I can only lay one of these across Dick's chains, they won't hold him long."

"Good. This little balcony is not above eight feet from the ground, so we can easily drop it. I think the moon is getting up, Jack."

"I hope not, Claude."

"So do I, for no doubt we shall do better without it; but it can't be helped. What a cold air is blowing."

Jack took off his hat, and held his face up to the night clouds for a few moments, and then he said—

"We shall have rain."

"Think you so?"

"I am sure of it. I have been so much in the open air at all times, and in all seasons, that I cannot doubt it for a moment; the signs and tokens of the coming weather are all familiar now to me. Look how the dark clouds hang over that light part of the sky, where the moon would be if she could only find an opening through which to show her fair face."

"You are right Jack. Come on."

They both sprang from the window into the garden, and then they paused for a few moments to listen, and make sure that they had given no alarm to

any one. All was as still as the very grave, and in cautious whispers, Jack said—

“This way, Claude. This is the way to the little fence. There, do you not feel the rain upon your face now?”

“I do.”

The night grew very black indeed, as Claude followed Jack across the garden of the inn. They both vaulted over the little fence Jack had spoken of, and found themselves in a straggling lane. It took them two or three minutes observation there, to be certain of the route, and then off they went at a good pace for Oxford.

When they got some distance from the inn, they conversed a little more freely together, for the road was perfectly quiet, and there did not seem to be a soul stirring in it but themselves.

“Well Jack,” said Claude. “We will take our success so far, as a good omen of completing our enterprise.”

“I hope we may, Claude.”

“To determine to succeed is one-half the battle. I only hope that no one, by any foolish opposition to us, will force us to use our pistols.”

“It would be a pity, Claude; but we have what we believe to be our duty to do as well as they have theirs; and so no more than they will, must we hesitate.”

“You are right, Jack; and it gives me no small pleasure to find you are in such a spirit.”

Jack’s prediction about the rain was now most abundantly verified, for it began to come down in a thick small shower, and with a steadiness, too, that pretty well showed it had set in for the night. Such a state of the weather was considered by both Jack and Claude as highly favourable to their enterprise, for they knew that upon such a night all persons would be indisposed to active watching, and that the interior yards of the prison would, in all probability, be deserted.

In all the distance from the inn to Oxford, they only met two persons; and the rain was falling so thickly and so steadily when they got into the streets, that they traversed several and only met one watchman, and he was snugly ensconced in his box, and merely mumbled a “Good-night,” as they passed him.

Jack answered him.

They then passed a house in which some Collegians, who were staying out in defiance of all college rules, were carousing, and singing tipsy choruses.

“That,” said Claude, “is how our great legislators and statesmen get their wisdom.”

“Humph!” said Jack, “I rather think that they got it from the rent rolls of their estates.”

Claude laughed, but as they were now near the prison, they no longer spoke upon any indifferent subject, and their whole thoughts and inquiries became concentrated upon the object they had in view.

The glover’s shop was closely shut up, and from top to bottom of the house there was not a vestige of a light visible.

“All’s right,” whispered Jack.

“Yes, I think so. Look well about you, Jack, and see that no one is lurking in the neighbourhood.”

They both walked about the street for a few moments, but no one was near, and then they dived into the doorway of the glover’s house, which happened to be a very deep and old-fashioned one, with quaintly carved door-posts.

Jack tried the lock with his skeleton keys.

“How goes it?” whispered Claude.

“All’s right. There’s only one bolt, and that’s below. Give me one of the jemmies, and I will soon loosen it.”

There was a creaking noise for a moment or two, and then a rather sharp crack.

"Done?" said Claude.

"Yes. I have cracked this crib, at all events. Come in, Claude. All's right. Nobody is stirring. I wish we knew what family there was in the house."

"So do I. Perhaps we shall find out, Jack, before we get out of it again?"

"We may."

They closed the shop-door now again, and in case any officious watchman, in his rounds, should take it into his head to try it, Jack shot the top bolt into its socket, advising Claude that he had done so, in case they should have to make a hasty escape, and he (Claude) should chance to reach the door first and find it fast, contrary to his expectation.

"Hush, Jack!"

"Did you hear anything, Claude?"

"At the moment I thought I did. It sounded like the sudden closing of a door or a window somewhere in the upper part of the house."

"The deuce it did."

They were both now profoundly silent for the space of about five minutes, during which they listened intently, but not the smallest sound met their ears, so that they came to the conclusion that either Claude had been mistaken altogether in the noise he had supposed he heard, or that it was some accidental sound in the house, which was no indication of any one really being up and stirring.

"It's all right enough, I think, Claude," whispered Jack.

"Yes, I think so, too. Come on."

"We must see our way, first."

Jack ignited a very small piece of wax-taper, and shielding it with his hands, they both looked about them for some mode of getting from the shop into the house. A small door, with a little muslin-blind, presented itself to their observation, and they immediately opened it. It led into a parlour, in which lay the remains of a supper. From this parlour a door opened to a staircase and a passage.

"We are right enough now," said Jack. "If we can only find some unoccupied room at the top of the house, we will soon be upon the roof, for if it has not a trap-door to it, I don't think it will take us very long to make one."

A cat got up from the hearth, upon which she had been sleeping, and looked at them.

"Poor pussey," said Claude.

"Fuff!" said the cat.

"Oh, very well," added Claude, "don't be friends then, if you don't feel inclined. I'm sure I don't want to force my acquaintance upon you. You had better lie down again and fancy it's all right."

"Come on," said Jack. "There is not a sound in the house; I have been listening on the staircase. Kill that cat."

"No, Jack. Not if the success of all our enterprise was at stake."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

JACK looked at Claude for a moment, and then he said—

"I forgot that these creatures were great favourites of yours, Claude."

"All creatures are, Jack."

"I know it. I spoke inconsiderately, and I should have been the last to like to carry out my suggestion, Claude. Come on, all is profoundly still. It will not be prudent to carry even this faint light up the staircase, as it may flash under the door of some one's chamber, and betray us."

"The socks, Jack."

"Ah, true, I had forgotten."

From his pocket, then, Jack produced two pairs of stout worsted-socks, and he and Claude drew them on over their boots, so that their tread was completely muffled, and unless the stairs should happen to creak under their actual weight, they could now ascend them without the slightest noise.

"Keep close to the wall, Claude," whispered Jack. "Very few stairs make any sound, if you tread there."

"Yes—yes, I will."

Out went the little wax taper, and then they commenced their passage up the stairs, holding by the wall as they went, and treating as carefully as it was possible to tread. Luckily for them, the house was old and substantial, the timbers being of solid oak, so that the staircase made none of the complaints that modern ones are in the habit of doing upon any one ascending them. The whole building was only one story above the shop, but from the outside they had seen, that if they could only gain the roof they would be very nearly on a level with the outer wall of the prison.

Twenty-five steps took them to the top of the staircase.

Jack touched Claude upon the arm, and whispered—

"I feel a room door. What do you think will be best to do?"

"Open it carefully."

"Very well. I can tell in a moment if any one is there by the feel of the air. That was an old trick that was taught me by a friend who is now no more. There is a warmth and a closeness in the air of a bed-room that you may know in a moment."

"Not a doubt. Proceed, Jack."

Jack found the handle of the door, and began very gently to turn it, but he found it had a slight propensity to squeak and with such handles he knew that the safest plan was rapidity of action. In an instant he turned it, and it made no noise. The door yielded, and Jack put his head into the room. All was dark, but in a moment a female voice said—

"John! John! John!"

"What the deuce now," growled some one half asleep.

"I'm very uneasy, John."

"You always are!"

"Yes, but I'm certain I heard something down stairs, and it's really too bad of Maria not to have come home. John, do you hear?"

"Oh dear yes. Go to sleep."

"But, what, suppose there's thieves, John?"

"Oh, bother!"

"Do you want to have your throat cut? Would you like that, John? Tell me that."

"I tell you that I ain't afraid. I don't believe thieves now-a-days come anywhere at a mere venture; and if they have any information they know deuced well that there is nothing to be got here."

Jack and Claude stepped away from the door of the room very carefully. They did not dare to shut it while the glover and his wife were wide awake, but in their hearts they thought the glover a very sensible man, and wished his wife anywhere but where she was.

"Another door-handle," whispered Jack.

"Open it then," said Claude.

"Hush. You really speak incantiously loud."

The glover's wife kept on talking, which was so fortunate that it covered any slight noise that Jack might make in opening the door of the other room which he had found. Fearing the lock might have the same peculiarity as the other one, he turned it sharply as he had done the first, and then he opened the door. The cold air of that room in a moment convinced him that it was empty.

"All's right," he whispered to Claude.

"How do you mean?"

"That no one is here. Come in—come in. Pass me, and I will shut the door. Hush! what an odd noise."

"It is the rain upon the glass," whispered Claude, after a moment or two's silence.

"Ah, so it is, and as I live there is a skylight in this room, which may do us good service. We must have a light now, Claude. Close the door as softly as you can before I set a match in a flame."

Claude closed the door carefully, so as not to produce the smallest sound, and in a moment afterwards, Jack had lit a phosphorus match, and a faint blue light shot over the apartment. He then set light to the little bit of taper, and they both stood profoundly still for a few moments, while Jack held it above his head and glanced around the apartment.

It was rather a mean-looking bed-chamber; one of those smothering machines called tent-bedsteads stood against a wall; and the appointments altogether were such as showed that nobody of any importance slept in that room.

"Not a very splendid chamber," said Claude.

"No; but just the thing for us. I only hope whoever is the tenant of it that they will not trouble it to-night. Now, Claude, can you give me a hoist up to the skylight?"

"Certainly."

By the assistance of Claude Jack got up to the skylight, which was slanting, and about the size of a smallish door. He found that it would open outwards, and then he got down.

"We can manage nicely," he said. "That table, and a chair upon it, will make it an easy enough job to get out and in; and the only thing now we have to dread is, some one coming to this room. But it is no use now stopping for trifles."

"Not a bit, Jack; so here's the table, and here's the chair."

By judiciously placing the table and chair, they found that they could obtain a perfect command over the glass trap-door. Claude opened it, and then the rain come in in a thick mist, dashing against his face, and at once extinguishing the little light.

"Can you get out, Claude?"

"Oh, yes, easily. We must feel our way when we do get out through it, for no light will live on such a night as this."

"Be careful, Claude."

"Depend upon that, Jack. Follow me as closely as you can."

They both got out on to the roof of the glover's house, and so intensely dark was the night that, when they were there, they were for several minutes afraid to move. This was not the fear of cowardice though, for there was neither glory nor profit to be got by being dashed to pieces by a fall from a house-top.

"It would not have been amiss after all," whispered Jack, "if the night had been a little finer."

"Never mind," replied Claude. "Only wait a little, and we shall get accustomed to the very dim light that comes from the night sky. Already, objects are beginning to show me their outlines more distinctly. Do you not see something very black just before us?"

"Yes; it is a stack of chimneys."

"Then, upon the other side is the wall of the prison."

"You are right, Claude; and, as you say, objects are now getting each moment more and more distinct. We shall be able after all, I think, to see our way tolerably well."

"Hark!"

A clock, belonging to one of the Universities, struck two.

"I had no idea it was so late," said Claude. "We really must lose no time, Jack. Let us creep round the chimney shaft, and have a look at the wall of the jail."



The Jew concocting Plans for the Rescue of Dick Turpin.

Cautiously, Claude crept over, and Jack followed him. A tile got loose and rolled along the roof, and then fell into the street, with a sudden crash. They both paused for a few moments, but as no notice was taken of the noise, they concluded it had given no alarm, and they proceeded as before.

It was not a difficult matter to get round the chimney; and when they were upon the other side of it, they found that, rising to the slope of the roof, the wall of the prison was not far short of ten feet above them. Still, that height was not so great but that assisting each other, they could climb it. The great difficulty now consisted in the fact that there was some jagged iron work on the top of the wall.

"We must be careful," said Claude, "of those spikes."

"I think it would be better to remove them with the crowbar," said Jack. "They have most probably been up since the jail was built; and so, in all likelihood, are as rotten as possible, being exposed for so long a time to all weathers. If you will give me a hoist up, Claude, I think I can bring them down."

Claude was quite strong enough to support Jack kneeling upon his

shoulders; and so Jack could easily reach the iron-work, which he found to be even more thin and rotten than he had supposed, for a large space of it came away with very little force, indeed; and Jack handed it down to Claude to place gently against the chimney shaft. By this process, about four feet of the prison wall was left perfectly clear for them to get upon; and the next thing they had to think of was the mode of fastening the ropes, so as to descend in safety on the other side, and so as likewise to leave them in such a state that they could make a rapid escape.

Their eighty feet of rope gave them plenty to spare; so after a very brief consultation, they resolved to fasten one end right round the chimney shaft, and then carry the other over the wall and down into the prison-yard beneath, where it would easily reach.

This was no sooner decided upon than it was done; and in such experienced hands, it was done well too. In the course of three or four minutes, Jack had slid down the rope into the prison yard, and Claude followed him.

The darkness in that yard was very great, surrounded as it was by high walls and buildings, and the rain had reduced it to a most wofully sloppy state, unequally paved as it was; but those little disagreeables were of small consequence. The great thing was to meet with no prison official, which most probably would have been the case, had the night been not the boisterous and inclement one that it was.

As it happened, not a soul was to be seen. They stood close to the wall for a few moments, crouching down and listening intently, and watching the various windows of the jail. In only one was there the faint vestige of a light.

"All's right," said Jack. "Have you the plan of the prison well in your mind, Claude?"

"Yes; so well, that I can lead you direct to Dick's cell; but we shall have a couple of doors to open."

"I don't think they will be very serious obstacles."

"I hope not. Come on."

Claude crossed the paved yard; and after feeling along the wall of the building, he stopped at a small door, near which was a pump that they could just dimly see standing up before them.

"This," he said, "is the door we seek. See about the opening it, Jack."

While Claude kept watch, Jack carefully examined the fastenings of the door, and found that they were all outside; as from the paved yard, it was never expected any attempt upon it would be made. There were two bolts and a large lock. The latter took some time to pick, for it happened to be unusually good; but, at length, Jack succeeded, and as he had already drawn back the bolts, the door yielded.

"Come in," he whispered. "We are safer out of the yard."

"Wonderfully safer," said Claude, "and not a little more comfortable, for the rain is coming down faster than ever, Jack."

They both passed through the door-way, and Jack closed the massive door again. The darkness in which they found themselves now was truly of the most profound character. Claude could not see the smallest vestige of his hand before his face; and as they felt pretty certain none of the officials of the prison were there, Jack began to procure a light.

In a few moments he had ignited the little taper, and they began then to look about them.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE place in which our adventurers now found themselves was anything but an inviting one. It was one of the long, damp, dismal passages of the prison, narrow and inconvenient; and even in the day-time, when the sun was brightly shining, it was a place of gloom; but in the eyes of Claude and

Jack, it had a special recommendation; for it was the route they sought, and which they knew, by their plan of the prison, would lead them to Turpin's cell.

"This will do," said Claude.

"Hush! Do not speak so loud. We don't know who may occupy one of the neighbouring cells, and some prisoner might think it no bad way of carrying favour with the magistracy, to give an alarm, that something unusual was going on."

"You are right, Jack."

"This is the way," added Jack, in the same cautious whisper in which he spoke. "This is the way, right on, and then an abrupt turn to the left."

"Yes, I recollect," replied Claude. "So says our plan, and, no doubt, that can be relied upon."

"Oh, most implicitly, I should say."

Jack's little taper light was of immense assistance to them; and while its flame was so small that it was not at all likely to send a wandering ray through any key-hole, or under any door, yet it sufficiently enlightened them how to act, and how to proceed.

They found that the passage in which they were was no less than forty paces in length before they came to the abrupt turn to the left, which the plan indicated to them. But when they reached that turning they knew that they were in the very passage from which the cell of their friend Turpin's opened.

"Here are the little doors," said Jack. "There ought to be eight of them; and it's quite a mercy that that officer at the public-house was so loquacious as to let us know in which Dick is."

"Yes, and here is the number."

They both paused now opposite to the cell door, and Claude placed his ear against it to listen if he could hear any one stirring within it; but all was as still as the very grave itself.

"Do you hear anything?" said Jack.

"Not a sound."

"What if they have removed him to some other part of the prison?"

"Then our trouble is all for nothing, and we can only get back as quickly as we can the way we came. I don't feel disposed to give it up quite so easily, though."

With this, Duval placed his mouth to the key-hole of the door, and in a prolonged whisper, he said—

"Dick Turpin—Dick—it is I—Claude Duval."

They heard a stir in the cell as if some one had fallen to the floor of it, and then a voice said—

"Confound it, what have I been dreaming about to fall off this shelf that they call a bed, in this den? I wonder what the time is?"

"Rather late," said Claude through the key-hole.

"Ah—what? Who is that?"

"Hush!—not so loud. Don't you know my voice?"

A sudden rush was made against the inside of the cell door that made it shake again, and Turpin said, in a much louder voice than caution would have dictated—

"Who is there? Speak again—speak again, I say, if it be not after all a mere dream."

"Hush, Dick."

"Ah, again I hear you. Who are you?"

"Hush, Dick; if you speak so loud you will ruin all. It is I, Claude, and Jack. We will get you out of this fix if we can. Be quiet until we get the door open, and then we will tell you all."

Not a sound came from the interior of the cell, and while Claude held the light, Jack began upon its fastenings. They consisted of a strong, long, and an iron bar, that went right across the door, and fitted into a kind of looped socket, to which was appended a massive padlock.

"Can you manage it?" said Claude.

"Oh, yes, I think so. All this fuss, after all, only takes up two locks, and I hope to be able to pick them both."

"Do so, then, as quickly as you can."

The actual lock of the cell door did not present any very serious obstacle to Jack; he soon forced back its bolt into the lock again, but the padlock was of some very primitive construction, and none of his false keys would touch it.

"We must appeal to the saws, Claude," he said.

"Will not the crowbar do?"

"I think not; I will try one of them. Ah, there it goes snap in two. I thought as much; it's not the fault of the jemmy, but the real fact is, we asked it to do too much, and getting beyond its strength it broke. Now for the saw."

Jack produced a small saw, that did not look as if it could cope with an iron bar, but it did so, and it was truly astonishing with what celerity it cut into the metal, passing through it in the course of about five minutes, and without making any more than a slight grating noise.

"All's right," said Jack, "now the door ought to open. Why don't it, Claude, I wonder?"

"It seems as tight as ever, Jack."

"It only sticks, I am convinced. Tell Turpin to push it on the inside; you see, we cannot get any good hold of it, or we should soon enough have it open."

"Push the door, Dick," whispered Claude, through the key-hole.

The push that Dick Turpin gave the door upon this intimation, was enough to drive it down from its hinges; as it was, it flew open with such a force, that Turpin rolled out into the passage, nearly upsetting both Claude and Jack.

"Hilloa!" said Jack, "not quite so fast."

"Where are you going, Dick?" said Claude.

Turpin was upon his feet again in a moment, notwithstanding he was grievously encumbered by his fetters, and holding out both his menaced hands, he said—

"Good gracious, Claude and Jack, how in the name of all that's wonderful came you both here? I can't yet persuade myself that I am in my senses. This must surely be some too vivid dream merely. Speak to me."

"It is real, Dick."

"Quite real," said Jack, "and we hope to get you out of this stone jug by the same route that we came into it. You don't suppose that we can have any other errand here?"

"And is it possible that you two have broken into the jail to rescue me? Can I believe as much?"

"It is tolerably possible, Dick," said Claude. "The impossibility would have been in our at all deserting you under such circumstances, while anything remained to be done with a chance to your rescue. But every minute is of value to us. Jack, relieve him of his fetters, and then we will be off directly."

"Oh, my friends," said Turpin, clasping his hands. "What can I, what ought I to say?"

"Nothing at all, just now, Dick," added Claude. "We shall, I hope, have plenty of time to talk, when we are outside of the walls of this not very inviting abode."

Jack at once busied himself with the fetters. They were rivetted on to Dick so that it was only by the help of the exquisite steel saws that he had with him that he, Jack, could succeed in freeing Dick from the heavy shackles in which he was confined.

"I shall feel something like myself," said Dick, "when all this infernal ironmongery is off my limbs. Nothing depresses a man so much as putting

him in fetters. They have such an effect upon me, that they almost stop me from thinking, and I almost doubt if I should have had the courage to make an attempt to escape from this place while I wore them."

"There they go," said Jack, as he sawed through the last of the rings and freed Dick from them.

"I feel myself already free," said Dick.

"Don't let us cry out," said Claude, "before we are out of the wood. I hope and expect that nothing very material will come in our way, but still unexpected events do happen, and all I have to say to you, Dick, is, to do nothing rashly."

"I will be guided by you."

"Very well, then let us come on. Ten minutes ought to place us in safety now, if we meet with no obstruction."

"Hush!" said Jack.

"What's the matter?"

"Don't you hear the bell ringing violently?—Come this way."

They all went to the corner which they had to turn to get into the long passage, and when there, they distinctly heard the violent ringing of a bell, but from the manner in which it was rung and from the time of night at which it sounded, it was tolerably clear that it portended something being rather amiss within the prison.

"Come on," said Claude. "Boldness may save us now. But I feel assured that we have no time to lose. That bell may concern us, and indeed I don't know how we can translate it otherwise, just now." Put out the light, Jack, the moment we get to the end of the long passage."

"I will," said Jack.

Off went Claude at a race down the passage, and he was closely followed by Dick Turpin and Jack. The little light would not stand any such violent progress through the cold air, and the consequence was, that out it went before Jack had taken half-a-dozen steps. They all went on, however, through the intense darkness as well as they could, and as the passage was tolerably straight and very narrow they could not go far wrong, although they did, by making accidental deviations to the right or to the left, bump themselves occasionally against the walls.

By holding out his hands before him, Claude prevented himself from coming with any great concussion against the door at the end of the passage, and opening it quickly he passed out into the court-yard.

The rain was falling quickly.

"On, on," he cried.

They followed him quickly, and then a gun went off somewhere in the prison with a loud report. It was not fired in that court-yard at all, so the only way they could account for it was, that it was a signal that something was amiss and that the turnkeys and warders were all to be on duty and on the alert.

The distance from the doorway through which our adventurers issued to the court and then to the place where the ropes hung from the wall top, was by no means very great, and through the dashing rain Claude went at great speed. He felt now that rapidity of action was a safer thing to look to than quietness, so he did not hesitate to cross that court-yard at a scamper.

By a little feeling on the wall, he soon touched the rope, and turning to Dick, he said—

"You can climb?"

"Like a cat, they say."

"Very good. Go up this rope, and when you cross the wall you will find a good enough footing on a house-top, and there wait for us. I hope we shall be soon with you."

"No," said Dick. "If a thousand deaths were behind me I would not go first. The danger is great to the last one, and I will be that last. That is my determination."

"Up, Dick—up."

"No, Claude! I cannot. Remember what time is lost by trying in vain to change my fixed resolve."

"By Heaven! that is true!" said Claude. "Follow me, Jack, as quick as you can."

Claude seized the rope, and by an exertion of great strength in the arms, he began to ascend it with rapidity. When he had got about six feet up, Jack followed, and the moment that he did so, the trampling of feet was heard in the court-yard, and through the murky sloppy night air came the flash of a lantern. A loud voice called out,—

"This way! this way! They must be close by here."

Neither Claude, Jack, nor Dick now spoke, but the former, by making gigantic efforts, reached the top of the wall; and there he paused, hanging over it and peering down into the court-yard to see what was going on. Jack was very near the top of the rope, but Dick was not many feet from the ground, when with a loud shout, the armed party in the court-yard rushed to the spot, and holding up their lanterns, at once exhibited the whole scene that was enacting.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE situation of Turpin was now most critical, as was indeed that of Jack likewise. It was an agony to Claude to see the peril of his friends, to feel that from where he was he could render them no assistance, and that he was compelled to be a mere spectator of what was going on.

There might be unknown perils behind him. The glover's house, for all he knew to the contrary, might be full by that time of foes; but he had ears for nothing and eyes for nothing, but the proceedings in that dismal court-yard into which the rain was pelting with such fury.

He called aloud for Turpin.

"Dick! Dick! Be quick? I pray you. Make an effort, and you are safe! Get six feet higher! I will shoot the first man who dares to molest you!"

"Oh, will you really?" said a voice from among officers. "There, my lads, you see that man on the wall! Can none of you take a good enough aim to pick him off?"

In a moment, thus licensed to do so, for it was the governor of the jail who spoke, a couple of pistols were fired at Claude, and the bullets of both hit the wall some three or four feet below where he was.

A rush was made to the end of the rope, and it was quite impossible, shaken violently as it was, for Turpin to do no more than cling to it; Jack got hold of Claude's hand and was drawn up, despite another shot that was fired at him.

"Where's Dick?" was Jack's first question, for he had only heard a tumult behind him, as by incredible exertions he ascended the rope and reached the parapet.

"Look below," said Claude.

The whole scene was now quite clearly to be seen in the court-yard. The rope was still shaken so violently, by a couple of turnkeys, that Dick could only hold on; he might to be sure, have slid down, and doubtless that was what they wanted him to do; but he would not, and in a few moments the same voice that urged the turnkeys to use their pistols upon Claude, called out:—

"Turpin, if you don't come down this moment and surrender yourself, you will be shot. I will myself put an end to this suspense by taking your life."

"Fire away," cried Dick.

"He is lost," said Jack.

"I fear so," said Claude, who had a pistol in his hand pointed to the

throng of persons in the court-yard, and quite ready to use if any urgent occasion should arise for it.

The lantern showed a tolerably bright light upon what was going on, and now Claude and Jack saw a man run from the group of prison officials and in a few seconds return with a ladder of about twenty feet long. He was a strong tall man; and unwieldy as that ladder was, he managed to move it with tolerable ease and facility. To the indignation of both Claude and Jack, the man with the ladder struck Dick Turpin with it so severely that he fell from the rope heavily to the pavement of the court-yard, where he lay apparently insensible from the sudden blow and the fall combined.

"Did you see that?" said Jack.

"I did," said Claude, and at the same instant he fired his pistol, and the man with the ladder fell with a loud cry, and rolled over twice, ladder and all, on the pavement. "Did you see that, Jack?"

"Yes, Claude, and I never saw a shot that pleased me better. But we do no good by remaining here; Dick is among the Philistines, and we cannot help him now. We may be able to do so by taking care of ourselves."

"You are right, Jack. Come on."

Claude took the lead, and Jack followed him closely, over the slippery and uncertain tiles of the glover's house. They reached with some difficulty the skylight, by which they had got out of the attic; and it was a great satisfaction, even in the midst of all this disappointment, to find that it was in the same state as when they had left it; the table and the chairs still remained in their places, so that the descent into the room was easily enough managed.

"Come on, Jack," said Claude, "it's all clear; it's a good thing that whoever sleeps in this bed has not come home yet."

"Yes; but we will yet think of something to aid Dick, Claude."

"We will aid him, Jack."

"You will be a little nearer to him than you think presently," cried a voice; a man precipitated himself upon Claude at the same instant that another seized Jack by the legs before he could get on the table that was under the skylight.

Duval, under these trying circumstances, preserved his admirable presence of mind, and made no immediate resistance beyond keeping his arms free from the other's gripe.

"Help," cried Jack.

"All's right," said Claude. "Pray, my friend, who are you when you are at home, that have got hold of my throat?"

"An officer, and one who is determined to take you to jail, my fine fellow, be you who you may."

Claude in a moment slipped his body down to the waist of the man, and by an effort he flung him right over upon his head with a tremendous bounce on the floor of the room. The door at that moment opened, and a man with a light appeared, saying:—

"Have you caught the rogues, Mr. Tomkins?"

"Oh, yes, old boy," cried Claude, and then, observing Jack's rather awkward position, he with one blow of his fist knocked his captor down over his already prostrate companion. Another officer was in the room, but he only stood up against the wall with a little gilt staff in his hand, crying—

"Come, come, this won't do, you know; come, come, come."

"What's the matter with you?" said Claude.

"Come, come, come."

Claude snatched the staff out of his hand, and flinging it at the man with the candle, who was standing open-mouthed at the door of the room, and who was no other than the glover himself, who had risen and found his skylight open, and so had gone next door to the prison, and given the information that had produced the failure of the whole enterprise.

Believing that now he was all but a murdered man, he dropped the candle,

and going backwards he forgot that the staircase was behind him, and away he went from the top to the bottom of it.

The candle did not go out by its fall, and Claude picked it up, saying—

“Come along, Jack, I don't think we have any more work to do here, and we may as well be lighted down stairs, as go tumbling along in the dark.”

“Are you hurt at all, Claude?”

“Not a bit. Come on, all's right, now, I think, with us, if it be not so with poor Dick.”

They hastily descended the stairs, and, upon the first landing they came to, they found a young girl of about eighteen or twenty years of age, with only her night-clothes on, and a small bed-room taper in her hand, looking the picture of fright. She certainly mistook Claude and Jack for the officers, seeing them coming down very composedly with a light.

“Oh, gentlemen,” she said, “have you caught the horrid wretches?”

“Yes, my dear, and all we want in return, is a kiss from those rosy lips.”

“A what, sir?”

“A kiss,” added Claude, as without further ceremony he took one, and Jack then followed his example, after which they descended the remainder of the stairs, and finding the street door open, they both at once sallied out into the street.

“Well,” said the girl, as she ascended the stairs to the upper rooms, “I had no idea the officers were such nice men. I wonder where uncle is, to be sure. Uncle! uncle!”

The rain was still falling in perfect torrents, when Jack and Claude, after all their dangers and really hair-breadth escapes, rushed out of the glover's house into the streets of Oxford. They kept well together, and hurried down the first turning they came to, so as to get as far from the jail as possible, and for the space of about five minutes neither of them spoke. The speed they went at, however, attracted the attention of a watchman, who in his mortal stupidity thought that two powerful men would of course allow themselves to be taken into custody by him. Stepping out of his box on to the pavement, he cried—

“Hilloa! stop!”

“Well?” said Claude.

“Come, come, I can't allow anybody to go on at this rate. You look suspicious people and that is quite enough for me.”

“Well?” said Claude again, for he knew if he only hurried on, that the watchman would alarm the whole city with his rattle that hung by his girdle.

“But I say it isn't well,” cried the watchman.

“Oh, he says he ain't well, Jack,” said Claude. “What a pity it is, that a guardian of the night should not be well. We are learned doctors, I assure you, my friend, and I have no doubt we shall be able to do you a world of good.”

“Do me good! Come, come, I shall take you both into custody, and march you off to the round-horse. You are just the sort of characters we take up in Oxford.”

“And you,” said Claude, “are just the sort of character that we always knock down anywhere.”

As he spoke, Claude made a dash at the watchman and caught him by the throat.

“Throw away his rattle, Jack,” he said.

“It's gone,” said Jack, as he broke it from the hold of the officious guardian of the night, and cast it down a neighbouring area. “It's gone, Claude.”

“That will do.”

Claude held the watchman so tightly by the throat that so far from his being able to cry out, it was only with the greatest difficulty imaginable he could draw breath enough to support life, and then with one thrust he flung him into the watch-box, and shutting it all up upon him, he cried—

"Give it a hoist, Jack. Once, twice—that will do."

Down went the watch-box upon its face with a crash upon the pavement, and the unfortunate guardian of the night found himself fairly imprisoned and as firmly fixed as though he had been entombed alive.

The first person that passed that way fell sprawling over the watch-box, but by that time Claude and Jack had got quite out of the city, and were hastening, despite the rain that still fell in torrents, towards the Inn where their horses were waiting for them.

Before they reached that place Claude paused, and spoke to Jack, saying—

"By the morning this affair will have got wind on Oxford, with such additions and embellishments as such a story is pretty sure to carry with it, and as you and I will be tolerably well described, it will not at all do for us to linger here."

"Of course not," said Jack. "I think the best way will be to go to the stable-yard and get out our cattle ourselves, and be off."

"Where to, Jack?"

"Heaven only knows. If I thought there was the smallest chance of doing any good to Dick, I should say, let us remain in Oxford; but I am afraid that is now all gone and past."

"I don't feel quite sure of that, Jack."

"Indeed, Claude?"

"No, and I don't like to leave Oxford while there is life in our friend."

"Do not then. I am as willing to stay as possible. From our valises we can easily get the means of making such alteration in our appearance as would puzzle a conjurer, and as the trial will be to-morrow, or rather we may say to-day, now, we shall not have long to wait."

"That is my thought, Jack. Something may arise yet, to enable us to be of use to Dick."

"I don't deny the possibility, Claude."

"But you think the probability small?"

"I own I do, and you must think so too; but in our time we have seen such improbable things come to pass, that I am willing to hope and expect something even against all my convictions."

"And I, too; so let us get our horses, and then we can go right through the city and put up at some house at the end of it, where I dare say for a few days we shall be all safe and right enough."

By this time they had reached the fence at the back of the Inn garden, which they had crossed before so well.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

CLAUDE felt that this was the only course to pursue, and he and Jack in a very few moments were in the large stable-yard of the Inn, and creeping along in search of the door of the stable in which Jack had seen their steeds put up for the night.

"Are you sure you know it, Jack?" whispered Claude.

"Quite. What a pool of rain this yard is to be sure. Come on. This way, Claude—this way. Ah, here is the door, and it is not locked—all's right."

"I will keep watch, Jack, while you go in and saddle the horses as quickly as you can. Be careful about the girths, for who knows but we may have a gallop yet to-night."

"I will, Claude."

Jack disappeared into the stable, and Claude stood quite close to the door, in order that if any one should be accidentally looking from the Inn, they should not detect his figure against the night sky. Jack was compelled to

procure a light in order to saddle the two horses, and the faint gleam of it came through a large chink in the ill-fitting door of the stable.

Suddenly, then, as Claude looked up at the Inn windows, he saw a light cross one of them, evidently from the inside, and then suddenly disappeared. He felt certain by that that some one was stirring in the Inn, and he whispered to Jack—

“Quick! everybody don’t sleep sound to-night.”

“Ah! is it so?”

“Yes. But we may have time yet.”

“Plenty. Here’s your horse, Claude. Mount him at once, and I will get mine ready. We must and will be off if all the world should say no to it. In another hour hence, we don’t know what may happen in this disagreeable town.”

“As quick as you can with your horse, Jack.”

“You be off, Claude.”

“No, no! You know better than that while you say it. When did I be off, and leave you in any danger?”

“Never,” said Jack, from the stable, while he was busy putting the saddle on his own horse; but let a person be as quick as he may, such an operation as saddling two horses will occupy some few minutes; and although few, if any, could surpass Jack in the speed of such an operation, yet the person who was up in the old Inn had time to come down into the yard. Claude was not a little surprised to see a man in his night-dress, carrying a lighted candle, suddenly appear at a door that opened into the stable yard.

The moment that he did so, out went his light, which the wind and the rain were not at all likely to permit to exist many moments; but this circumstance did not seem to have the least effect upon the man, who, still holding the candle and candlestick exactly as if the former were in a state of ignition, and doing him a deal of good in showing him his way, walked slowly and calmly into the stable yard.

“What on earth can be the meaning of all this?” thought Claude. “Whoever it is he takes it remarkably easy. Jack, are you quite ready now? Here’s some one coming, or else a ghost.”

“A ghost?” said Jack, as he appeared at the stable door with his horse, all ready for the road. “A ghost! did you say, Claude?”

“Yes, I did. Only look where that figure in white glides along by the wall there. Do you not see it?”

“I do, indeed. Who is it?”

“Perhaps if you were to say, ‘what is it?’ you would be nearer the mark; for surely it cannot be a living man.”

“Let us mount, and be off,” said Jack, as he sprang into his saddle. “I don’t half like these kind of sights. Mount, Claude, mount at once, and let us get into the meadows.”

Claude mounted, but yet he lingered.

“Stay a bit, Jack,” he said. “This is too curious not to make one wish to stay and see the end of it. I pray you to stop a bit.”

“If you wish it, Claude.”

“I do, indeed, Jack. Only look where the mysterious figure comes. You can see how he holds the candlestick, and he believes that it lights him on his way. Only see how he steps over the puddles. By all that’s good, ghost or no ghost, you will have a wet skin on such a night as this.”

“I don’t half like it, Claude. It looks ominous.”

“Pho! pho! You hold the bridle of my horse. If we go away without finding out what all this means, we shall be puzzling ourselves about it at other times when we may be better employed. Hold the horse, Jack.”

“What would you do, Claude?”

“Go and meet the figure. If it be mortal, I should like to let him see that we are not afraid of him; and if anything else come to warn us of anything, I am determined it shall not have any excuse for leaving the warning in obscurity, for I will speak to it.”

"Claude! Claude! you are fool-hardy, indeed you are. I beg that you will not go; it is much better to let these kind of sights be. Do not seek to make it more frightful than it is."

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude as he dismounted, "I did not think you were so superstitious. I never yet saw anything worse than myself, and I don't think, do you know, that I ever shall; so whatever you do, don't let the horse stray. I will be back to you in a few moments."

Jack saw Claude stride across the yard in the direction of the figure with evident misgivings; but yet he took the bridle of the horse, and strung it round his arm so that it should not be startled into flight by whatever might happen. Claude did not for a moment pause in his progress towards the curious figure all in white, nor did that figure in any manner shrink from or avoid him, so that it was quite a curious thing to see them by the dim morning light and in the rain, gradually approaching each other.

It chilled Jack to look on at such a scene, for it was beyond his imagination to guess how it could possibly end; and now he saw Claude pause and step aside, and the white figure passed him without the remotest notice, and come on as though there had been no such person in its immediate vicinity.

"By Heaven!" said Jack, "it's to me it is coming! It won't speak to Claude. It's some visitor to me only, that is quite clear, and if it gets me to wait for it, I'm a Dutchman; flesh and blood is one thing, but ghosts in white are another, and I don't care how little I have to do with them."

With this, Jack did not wait another moment for Claude, but turning the horses' heads towards the slight fence that divided the Inn yard from the meadows, he made them both clear it at a bound. He had no intention of doing more than place the fence between him and the spectre, and when he had done so, he faced about again to look for Claude. He soon saw him running across the yard.

"Come!" said Jack; "come, Claude! quick! I cannot stay here. He is coming to me."

"And what then?" said Claude, as he placed his hands on the top of the little fence to vault over. At the moment that Claude made his spring, bang went some fire-arms from one of the windows of the Inn, and Jack thought he was hit, for Claude rolled on to the green sward on the meadow side of the fence, instead of alighting on his feet.

Jack saw the window from which the flash of the gun came, and drawing a pistol from his saddle, he at once fired at it, and from the crash of broken glass he was quite satisfied that he had hit his mark.

"All's right," said Claude, as he bounded to his feet and sprang to his saddle.

"You are not hurt, Claude?"

"Not a bit. The sudden noise startled me, and I slipped in taking my leap, that was all."

"Thank the fates for that. But look at the figure. It has turned again."

"It's only the landlord walking in his sleep, Jack."

"Walking in his sleep?"

"Yes. Did you never hear of that sort of thing before?"

"Oh, yes, often, and seen it too. I only wonder that it did not at once strike me as a solution of the mystery. But that gun or pistol shot was not fired by any one in their sleep, Claude."

"Not a bit of it. We have enemies now on the foot, Jack. My impression is that we are traced in some sort of way from Oxford. Ah, here they come. Now we shall see what they mean by it, and what force they are in."

The private back door of the Inn was suddenly now opened, and several persons with lanterns issued forth. A group of men immediately behind them appeared, and running across the yard, one cried—

"Get us out some cattle as quick as you can, ostler. Take anybody's. It's on public service, and it will be all right. Stop! you villains! Surrender this instant, or it will be worse for you. You have shot Mr. Wolf."

"You don't say so?" said Claude. "And pray who is Mr. Wolf, when he is at home?"

"The chief constable of Oxford, you villains! Oh, you will swing for this as sure as eggs are eggs. You had better give in at once, for there are eight of us, and we are determined fellows.

"Come on, Jack," said Claude. "That will do. We will leave these eight determined fellows to mount at their leisure."

Jack and Claude turned their horses' heads, but the moment they did so, bang, bang, bang, went no less than three pistols at them. In a moment Claude turned, and drawing one of his pistols, he fired, crying,—“It was cowardly to keep your fire till our backs were to you. Now blaze away!”

With a shriek, one of the officers fell into the arms of his comrade, and everybody there was by far too busy to think of firing again at Claude and Jack, who once more tried to retreat; but they had not got many paces before a rattling volley of pistol-shots were sent after them, and one bullet struck Claude on the heel of his boot.

"A little higher," said Claude, "and it might have spoilt my dancing. Come on, Jack. I have no idea of being made an animated target of by a parcel of blundering police-officers, who might knock one over by chance."

"Not at all pleasant," said Jack.

They gave their horses their heads, and off they went over the meadows at a quick pace. The rain still came down, but not so heavily as it had, and the ground was disagreeably heavy; but still it was amazing the speed they made by going lightly over it, and finally coming to a privet hedge, they leaped it, and found themselves in a road that was tolerably hard and good.

"I don't want a race with those officers," said Claude. "We have other fish to fry."

"Certainly," replied Jack. "Let us trot along this road. We may come to some shelter for ought we know to the contrary."

"Very good. I shall not be very particular as to what it is if we can only give them the double in any way."

With this view, they trotted on, Claude taking slightly the lead; and as the dawn had now made considerable progress, they could see about them very well. In the course of a few moments they came to the lodge gates of some estate, and Claude at once drew up, saying, "Jack, this is the very place;" and then, without waiting for the smallest reply from Jack, he rung a smart peal at a bell, the handle of which hung close at hand.

"Who is there?" said a voice from one of the lodge windows.

"I," said Claude, in a voice of authority. "How dare you ask who is there? Open the gates directly."

"Yes, sir;—beg pardon, sir;—coming, sir," said the voice.

"So much for the power of impudence," said Claude to Jack. "Now, that fool thinks I am some one of great authority, although he cannot know me from Adam. You will see how obsequious he will be when he opens the gate."

"But he will find out his mistake, Claude."

"Not a bit of it. Do you think after the sample that he has of my temper, he will venture to ask me a question? Not he. Take my word for it, Jack, impudence in this world, which may be anybody's capital, if they know how to use it, goes a very long way indeed."

CHAPTER XC.

JACK had hardly so much faith as Claude in the power of assurance; but he had to have his infidelity in that particular corrected, for in a few moments, the lodge-keeper, half dressed, rushed out of his little residence, and flung the gates wide open, saying as he did—

"I am sorry, sir, I was not up. Hope you will excuse it, sir."

"Hold your noise!" said Claude.

The gate-keeper only bowed. "Of course," he thought to himself, "this must be some very great man, indeed, or he never could speak in such a tone to any one." Claude, followed by Jack, rode into the open space in front of the lodge, and then glancing about, he, seeing a little enclosed paddock of about a quarter of an acre close at hand, he said, sharply, "There are none of them up at the house yet, I suppose?"

"No, sir, if you please," said the gate-keeper.

"Ah! so I thought; I won't disturb them though. Quite time enough to put them all out of their way, and give them no end of trouble, and then the fidgets, for fear everything should not be just as I like, when they do get up. Here, turn the two horses into that paddock. Don't touch their gear—I and my friend will sit down in your little room here for a time."

"Yes, sir, of course, sir. I will set light to the fire. The family are early risers, sir, at the hall, and in an hour now, I daresay, the old gentleman will be stirring."

"Oh, will he! How is he looking now?"

"Pretty well, sir; but his lame leg will never let him be what he was."

"What! Ain't that any better?"

"No, sir, they say not."

Claude and Jack walked into the lodge, and they had hardly been there two minutes when, like a whirlwind, by swept some half dozen mounted men, no doubt from the Inn. Claude went to the little latticed window of the lodge, which commanded a tolerable view of the road, and he had the satisfaction to see the officers disappear, they, no doubt, having the full impression that they were in full cry after the two highwaymen. Claude thought it advisable to wait a few moments longer; and then, looking at his superb watch—the diamonds round the rim of which dazzled the eyes of the gate-keeper—he turned to Jack, and said—

"General, what say you to a canter, and then for us to come back here? By that time they will be up and stirring."

Jack, of course, understood Claude's aim, so he replied in a tone of well-assumed deference—

"As your grace pleases."

When the gate-keeper heard that one of his guests was a general, and the other a "Grace," they might both have wiped their boots on his back, if they had been so inclined, for the poor creature had been so accustomed all his life to look upon the possessors of titles as some superior creation, that he had never the remotest idea that they were but poor frail mortals like himself.

"The horses to the gate," said Claude, with a sharpness that made the man jump as though a pistol had gone off close to his ear.

"Oh, yes—yes my lord—that your grace. Yes, directly."

"What an idiot," said Jack, when he left the little room to obey Claude's imperious orders.

"One of many, Jack."

"No doubt of it. But what a humiliating thing it is to think of, that one of God's creatures, with some brains in his head, should make himself such a crawling sycophant to another."

"It is, Jack. But you will find that it is the slave that always makes the tyrant, and not the tyrant the slave."

"I believe you are right, Claude."

This little highly philosophical conversation was put a stop to, by the gate-keeper crawling into the room to say that the horses were ready, upon which out strode Claude and Jack, and without so much as a "thank you," or one word of civility, they mounted their steeds and rode off, the gate-keeper keeping his body bent quite at a right angle until they were out of sight.

"Ah," he said, as he closed the gate. "There's real gentlemen for you."

Don't come for nobody at all, and gives us much trouble as possible, and ready to snap your head off for nothing. That's how you may always know a real gentleman from the sham ones. A duke, no doubt, and some general. I'll run up to the house and see if anybody's up, and tell 'em they will have visitors to breakfast soon."

Claude and Jack took precisely the other direction to that which the officers took, and soon placed a couple of miles between them and the Inn which had so nearly been the scene of a serious misadventure to them. They then came out upon a much broader road than the one they were upon, and they saw a finger-post, upon which the words "To Oxford" let them know in which direction to go.

"You don't wish me to abandon Dick?" said Claude. "You have no disinclination, I hope, to return to Oxford, Jack, even after what has taken place?"

"None in the least, Claude."

"I am glad of that. I don't like to do anything against your judgment, Jack, but in good truth I know that both you and I are such adepts in disguises that I feel assured if we once get an opportunity of changing our apparel, we shall do remarkably well. Who is this coming along the road?"

"A Jew," said Jack, "I think—Yes—look at his bag."

"You are right. I wonder if he resides at Oxford. If so, I should not be at all disinclined to trust him to some extent. A confidant would be invaluable to us just now, Jack; and it is highly probable he might be bought for a hundred pounds or so, which would be no great object to us, as we could make somebody in Oxford pay it in all likelihood before we left."

"Easily," said Jack. "Shall we speak to him and sound him a little upon the matter?"

"Yes—yes, do it."

By this time the Jew, who was rather a poor looking man, and to all appearance old, and a little lame, had got close up to them, and then he paused, and shading his eyes from the light which came strongly in that direction, he said—

"Yes, it's all right. Claude Duval, my dear, how are you? and, Jack, my boy, I hope you are well?"

"Why, how is this, sir?" said Claude; "you know us?"

"Yes, surely, haven't I been looking for you, and trudging about the roads for the last four hours, ever since that shindy at the stone jug? To be sure I have."

"But I am certain I never saw you before," said Claude.

"Nor I," said Jack.

"But I have seen you both in London. At the White Bear in Oxford Street I saw you twice, and I don't forget people in your line of business. Be so good as to read that."

With these words the Jew took from his pocket a common horn snuff-box, and after unscrewing the lid with a squeak that set all Claude's and Jack's teeth on edge, he handed the former a little scrap of paper, upon which was written:

"Trust Zadoc. Dick Turpin."

"Oh, then, you are a friend of Dick's?"

"I am in the business and a friend of all customers. I have a little place in the town and a little place out of it; and between the two I pick up a crust. Dick, who is in the jug, knows me, and gave me that, in case I wanted to do a little business with any friend of his. I heard all about what happened at the jail, and I at once knew that when the nabs mentioned you they were right. But they don't know Jack."

"Then how did you know me?" said Jack.

"Oh, I knew you and Claude were together, so I guessed it was you; but all the roads will be too hot to hold you in another hour. The beaks and the judges will take a little trouble, and they are going to swear in a hundred

special constables on purpose for you, so that they are determined to have you if they can. The only safe thing for you is, off and away."

"And that I do not like," said Claude.

"Not like?" said the Jew. "Not like?"

"No, Zadoc! I have made up my mind, and so has Jack made up his, to stay and see the last of Dick if we cannot save him. I hope that something will yet turn up to enable us to do him a good turn; but go we will not until the breath is fairly out of his body."

The Jew considered for a few moments, and then he said:—

"Well, well! wilful men must have their way. Follow me, if you wish to be free from the grabs for the rest of to-day. Come this way, and I will take you to where you will have time to think without being feared to look about you."

"I thank you," said Claude; "but of course this is a matter of business."

"Quite."

"Then you will allow us to convince you that you will not be badly paid; take this fifty-pound-note as an earnest of our bargain together, and half-a-dozen such shall not stand in the way of Dick's release from limbo."

The Jew held the note up between his eyes and the sky for a few moments, and then with a nod of approbation he rolled it up into a little ball and put it in his pocket.

"Good," he said.

"I hope so," said Claude.

"Excuse me," said Zadoc, "I did not allude to the note; I meant that we were quite agreed that everything was to be done that could be done for Dick. I have often heard, Claude Duval, that you were more than liberal, and this proves it. It is a sound policy to pay men like me well. You will find that out in the long run."

"I have found it out long ago," said Claude, "so now lead on, Master Zadoc, to this place of safety that you talk of, where we may have the privilege of thinking without the necessity of keeping our eyes on the stretch for enemies."

"That I will do," said Zadoc. "Come on."

He went to the side of the road and opened a large white gate, which looked as if it led into some orchard, but Claude was not one who ever hesitated. He trusted, or he did not; and if he did, he trusted implicitly; so, without a moment's hesitation he followed the Jew through the white gate, and Jack followed Claude.

Zadoc closed the gate again, and locked it. Then he took a small silver whistle from his pocket and blew a wailing kind of note upon it that at the moment, if no one had seen how it was produced, might have puzzled them to say whether it was the call of some wild bird or a mere artificial sound.

In the course of two or three minutes then, during which, Zadoc conversed in a low tone with Claude, an old man and a boy came round some large laurel bushes and bowed to the party. Zadoc spoke to the old man and boy in a language unknown to Claude, and then turning to him, he said—

"If you will let him take your horses they will be well cared for, and whether I am here or not he will deliver them to you. He will not forget you, and to summon him you have only to whistle with as prolonged a note as possible, as he is not very bright in hearing, and his little grandson is not always here."

Claude and Jack at once dismounted, and gave their steeds to the old man and the boy.

"I have a whistle," said Jack, "which I always carry with me in case Claude and I should be separated by any accident, so that I shall easily be able to give him the signal."

"That is all right, said the Jew; "but I don't expect that there will be any hurry or emergency, or that you will have occasion to come here without me: but it is a well to be provided against any possible emergency."

"You are quite right," said Claude. "This is your country place then, I suppose, in which you transact business?"

"Yes, but I don't let all my customers come here. It is only such as yourselves that I let into this secret. Follow me to the house. It is but a cottage, and yet you will find yourselves more secure in it than in many a palace."

"There is not a doubt of that," said Claude. "I have no great faith in the security of palaces."

CHAPTER XCI.

CLAUDE was specially well pleased at their meeting with the Jew; and following his established rule in such cases, he trusted him implicitly. The reader will not fail to recollect how frequently Claude has insisted upon this rule of confidence as being one well worth the following.

Jack could not feel so fully and fearlessly, as Claude, a confidence in any one, and the consequence was that he followed with much more of a look of doubt the footsteps of Zadoc.

The distance to the Jew's cottage was sufficient to remove it from the high-road, so that it was completely out of ear-shot of any chance passenger.

"You will always find this, if you please to avail yourself of it," said Zadoc, "a place of refuge. All I ask of you or Jack is what I think I have a right to ask."

"And what may that be?" said Claude.

"Simply, that you will never come to it or leave it when, to your knowledge, any one can observe you, for if once the police set an eye of suspicion upon this little place, its usefulness will be gone at once, and for ever."

"That is a condition that we shall not forget," said Claude. "You hear it, Jack, and of course subscribe to it?"

"Certainly," replied Jack. "It would, indeed be a monstrous thing to avail oneself of the hospitality of any place, and then for ever afterwards invest it with such a suspicion, that it shall be of no use to any one else. I would die at the gate of this place, rather than I would enter while to my knowledge a human eye was upon me."

"I thank you both," said the Jew. "Your promises are quite sufficient for me, and here then you may find yourselves quite at home, and I daresay you have no sort of objection to such a breakfast as we can find for you."

The door of the house yielded to Zadoc's touch, and he slipped on one side to allow his visitors to enter the place. They did so fearlessly, and found themselves in a pleasant enough cottage-like residence, amply, and indeed handsomely, provided with every requisite for comfort. The Jew closed the door after them, and then in the style of an Eastern monarch summoning his slaves, he clapped his hands thrice together, upon which an old woman made her appearance, and with great demonstration of respect, awaited the commands of Zadoc, who she evidently looked upon as some very superior being.

"Esther," said Zadoc, "may we trespass upon your larder for a breakfast this morning? These are friends of mine."

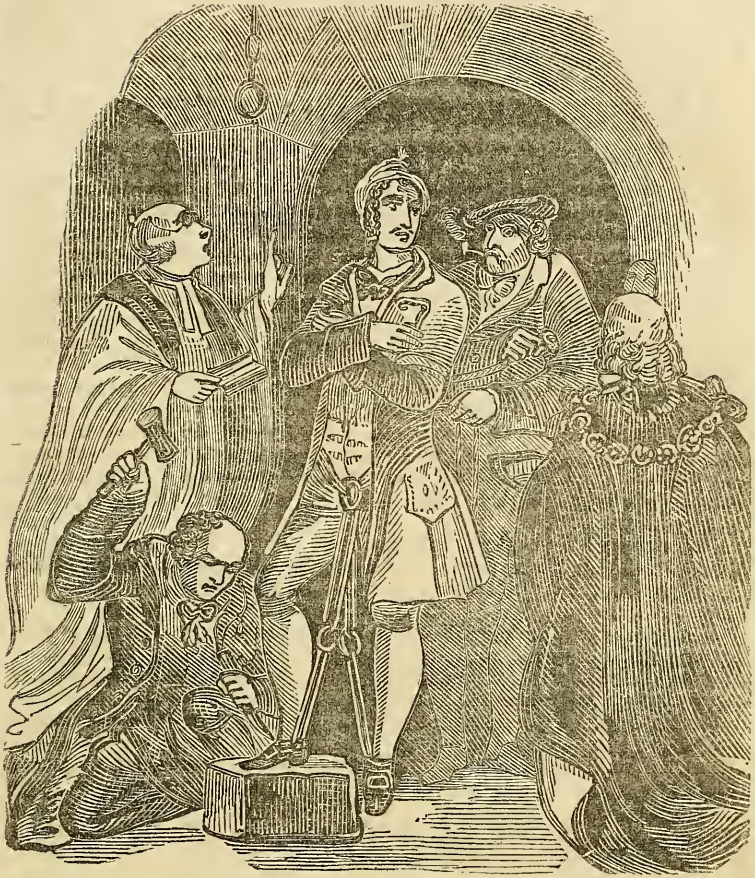
The old woman made no reply in words, but by a very low and reverential obeisance, she signified with what perfect submission she received the order, and how willing she was to execute it. She then went hastily away again through the door she had arrived by.

"You have a willing servant," said Claude.

"She is a member of my own family," replied Zadoc.

"I beg your pardon then, for naming her in connexion with anything like servitude."

"Do not fancy that it is any offence. Esther and I belong to the same



The Officials preparing Turpin for Execution.

race. She serves me for love, and I am but too happy to be able to make her old age comfortable. Step this way, and you will soon see, unless I am very much mistaken, and we have happened to take Esther more than usually at unawares, that she can manage to get up an extemporaneous breakfast that need not be despised."

Jack and Claude followed the Jew into a very pretty apartment of the cottage; as they did so, they could but exchange looks of surprise, for since crossing his own threshold the whole manner of Zadoc had altered, and there was an elevation of style and manner about him, such as they could hardly have expected.

Claude knew, however, quite enough of the singular and highly interesting people to whom Zadoc belonged, scarcely to wonder at any strange transformation of character that took place with them in their own houses in distinction to their appearance abroad among the Gentiles.

The room in which they now were was a pretty one, with long windows opening into a small, but charmingly kept conservatory, where the orange tree presented its tempting-looking fruit, and where the fig sent forth its

broad leaves in abundance. Numerous flowers, too, graced that little place; and a view from the room was enough to make any one believe that he had been transported suddenly by the wand of an enchanter to some much more favoured clime, than our bleak and somewhat inhospitable one.

"Were I you," said Claude, "I should spend many an hour here."

"I do," replied Zadoc, "as many as I can. Yon greenhouse has in it many shrubs and plants from that land which all of my people regard with veneration."

"And which you all hope to see again?"

"It is more than a hope," said the Jew, quietly. "It is a certainty. They have been promised it by one who performs all promises, and we know that the time will come, when we shall be great in the land of our fathers, and when, as a mighty nation, we shall rise again from the ashes of our ancient glory."

The Jew's eyes flashed with enthusiasm as he spoke, and Claude as he looked at him, could not but feel how likely it was that such a conviction would maintain, as it had maintained, this scattered people through all difficulties and under all privations.

The entrance of Esther, with a tray containing some of the materials for breakfast, put a stop to a conversation that was evidently becoming by far too exciting for the Jew. In the course of a few minutes a marvellously well-laid table was set out, and Claude and Jack partook of as hearty a breakfast as ever they had enjoyed in all their lives. When Zadoc saw that they had quite satisfied themselves, he rose saying—

"Now, then, to business."

"With all my heart," said Claude.

"Follow me, then, and we will consult together in the garden about what is best to be done, and leave Esther at her own good leisure to remove the remains of our repast."

Claude and Jack followed Zadoc through the conservatory into the garden beyond, which was completely protected from observation by close growing trees, and between them a complete labyrinth of interlacing evergreens. It was, in truth, a charming spot.

"It is settled, then," said Zadoc, "that you will do something for Turpin?"

"Quite."

"Well, all that remains for us to conclude is that that something shall be as likely of success as possible, and as little hazardous."

"Precisely."

"He will be tried to-day, and ordered for execution—for that he will be found guilty will not once permit of a doubt."

"This is Friday!"

"Yes, and he will be hanged on Monday morning, unless something in the meantime can be done. After the failure at the jail last night, there is no chance of anything being accomplished in that quarter. Turpin will be taken in a cart to the common, outside the town, and there executed, and his body will be hung in chains, no doubt. Now, with a knowledge of all these circumstances, what, in your calm, cool, deliberate judgment can be done?"

Claude was silent.

"Can you take him from the prison? No! Can you wrest him from the court, in the presence of the judges and all the ministers of the law? No! Can you rescue him on the way to execution? No! Can you save him on the scaffold? Yes!"

Claude and Jack both started at this sudden transition to all the Jew's negatives.

"What mean you? Are you serious?" said Claude.

"I am to the full as serious as such a subject ought to make me. If you don't mind five hundred pounds I think it may be done."

"Not a straw! Double the sum, if you like."

"Very good. We will say one thousand pounds?"

Jack plucked Claude by the sleeve, and he understood it as a friendly admonition to put some bounds to his prodigality.

"My friend," said Zadoc, "when one of my people offers you anything for five hundred pounds, never offer him one thousand pounds, for that is then his price."

"I will not draw back from my offer," said Claude. "I have said one thousand pounds, and it shall be that amount if Turpin is free."

"Five hundred pounds," said Zadoc, "for the attempt, and another five hundred if it be successful. Will that do?"

"Perfectly well; and now tell me by what wonderful means you will accomplish this undertaking. It seems to me at this present moment as though you would require more than mortal means to carry out what you propose. I am all impatience."

"Draw nearer both of you, and you shall hear."

Claude stood close to the Jew on one side, and Jack upon the other, and then he spoke in a clear voice, saying—

"We may take for granted all the facts, namely: that Turpin will be tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death on the common on Monday morning next; and we may take for granted that any attempt between this time and that to do anything will be perfectly futile, and indeed only recoil on our own heads."

Claude nodded.

"Well, on Monday morning at seven o'clock it will be found out that the hangman is very ill and cannot rise from his bed to perform his duties. But he will recommend a man, of whom he knows a little, to officiate, and the sheriff will be delighted to snatch at any one in the emergency."

"But—but——"

"Nay, hear me out."

"I will. Excuse the interruption. I will not say another word until you have concluded your plans."

"Well, that hangman's substitute will ride in the cart with Turpin to the place of execution, after promising him the clergyman of the jail will likewise be with them. Then that hangman's deputy will seize a sharp knife from his girdle, with which he will be well prepared, and in a moment cut the cords that bind the prisoner, and he can so manage, that only one on each side will have to be cut at all; and having as they ride along told Turpin what to do, he will jump from the cart to where a man is mounted on a fleet horse, and holding another by the bridle, he will mount the led horse and be off. The hangman's deputy will, then, if he have the opportunity, affect to pursue them, and make his way here, where he will find his own gallant and well-trained steed waiting for him."

"Waiting for him here?" cried Claude.

"His steed?" said Jack. "The deputy hangman's gallant steed?"

"Precisely."

"But how will you get that man to play his part so well?" said Claude.

"Don't you think you could do it?"

"I?"

"Yes. Who else could be depended upon in such a case? Who but you must play the executioner's substitute? and who but Jack must wait with the led horse close to the scaffold? Whose steed but yours do you think I would have here waiting?"

"By all that's good," said Claude, as he drew a long breath, "it will do; and whether it will or not, it is the only plan at all likely of success. What say you, Jack, to it? Will you undertake it?"

"If you will, Claude, yes."

"Assuredly I will; and we must have a first-rate horse for Turpin."

"I have his own brave mare Bess, as he calls her, in my stable," said the Jew, quietly.

"You have? Then if once he gets on her back he is as safe and free as the wind!"

"I think so likewise. 'Tis in good truth a noble creature. We will take care to give her some white blemishes by Monday morning to prevent her recognition by any eye that may be curious in horse-flesh, and more than usually knowing about Turpin's steed."

"Yes, that can easily be done. But how will you secure the regular hangman's co-operation in this affair?"

"He is human."

"Are you certain of him?"

"I am."

"Then, for the life of me, I do not see why the plan should not succeed. All that it requires are good disguises, and boldness and address. Don't you think well of the scheme, Jack?"

"I think better of it the more I get familiarised with it."

"That is a good sign," said the Jew. "A plan which loses no attraction, upon a closer scrutiny, is likely to wear well. But if we determine upon this, we must be up and doing. Is it agreed upon, without doubt and without reservation, by both of you?"

"By me, yes," said Claude.

"And by me," said Jack.

"Very well; then no doubt you would like to be present at the trial, which will be on in another hour at the court-house. Come into the cottage, and I shall be able to provide you with complete disguises, so that you may walk into Oxford, and no one will be a bit the wiser as to whom you may be. I will conduct the affair with the executioner entirely myself. Come in. In truth, I do think you will save him."

CHAPTER XCII.

IN the course of half an hour more, Claude and Jack were deliberately walking into Oxford, in the disguise of a couple of graziers; and so capitally was their costume arranged and put on, that those who knew them the most intimately could never have suspected who they were.

Claude represented a man past the prime of life. He was stuffed out to look three times his real size, and the grizzly whiskers that the Jew gave him, in truth, most effectually disguised him. A light-coloured wig transformed Jack into a much younger-looking man than he really was; and so, with a perfect confidence in the excellence of their disguises, they fully intended to be present at Dick Turpin's trial.

The information of the Jew regarding the coming on of the trial on that morning was perfectly correct, and it will be seen that this information upon other points was equally to the purpose. At that time, hanging for highway robbery was quite a common thing, and it was very usual to execute the culprit upon or very near to the spot upon which the offence for which he specifically suffered was committed; and when the party apprehended was so well known and widely circulated a knight of the road as Dick Turpin, it was very charitably supposed that a very small amount of evidence sufficed, both with judge and jury, to convict him.

The court was very much crowded, so much so that the conscientious door-keepers adopted the London practice, and began not to find room for any one unless they were paid; but that was no object to Claude and Jack, and they had no ambition to draw upon themselves any sort of attention by carping at anything; so they soon found themselves, by virtue of one shilling each, in the court. It was with difficulty they got standing room in rather an obscure corner.

Dick Turpin had only just been placed at the dock, and from his pale face, and the marks of several sears upon it, it was quite evident that he had suffered

considerably on the previous night in the prison-yard, upon the occasion of the bold attempt to escape.

He was placed upon his trial directly, and the counsel for the prosecution very unfairly made a long exordium about the attempted escape from the prison, in which he ought to have been stopped by the court; for it had really nothing to do with the case. From this, however, both Claude and Jack learned that it was no other than the Governor of the jail that the former had shot, and that he was dead.

"Serve him right," said a voice near Claude.

Jack felt at that moment a great disposition to say something; but a slight sign from Claude warned him to be silent. Zadoc had particularly cautioned them both to make no acquaintance in the town or in the court.

Dick Turpin pleaded not guilty to the charge made against him; but he did so with the listless air of a man who feels that his fate is determined upon, and that nothing can save him.

With the proceedings of the trial the readers of this narrative need not be troubled, inasmuch as it was one of the most ordinary description, and indeed it was hurried over with a most unseemly haste, as though judge and jury had been fully agreed in the propriety of hanging Dick Turpin, but felt it to be just necessary to go through a certain formula beforehand in the matter.

"Guilty," said the foreman of the jury, almost before the question was well out of the lips of the proper officer.

"Very good," said the judge. "Richard Turpin, you have been convicted by a careful, conscientious, and intelligent jury of your fellow countrymen, of the offence laid to your charge. Have you anything to say why the sentence of the law should not be passed upon you in due form?"

"It is needless," said Dick, "to say anything. I know very well I am to be shuffled out of the world because of my reputation. Well, be it so. It was the end I looked to, and now my last words are—'Thanks to the two kind friends who, last night, did all they could for me.'"

"You ought to be thinking of other things," said the judge, "you unhappy man, than thinking of two reprobates, who will soon be in the hands of offended justice."

"There I differ with you," said Dick. "You have not caught them yet. I know by what you say, that you have not, and therefore I feel very confident you will not catch them at all. It is a wonderful comfort to me at such a time as this, to feel that they who risked so much for me have not suffered by that amount of gallant friendship. God bless them both!"

"This is indeed terrible," said the judge, "to find a criminal over the brink of eternity with so little consciousness of his situation."

"Perhaps, my lord," said Dick, "you will hardly think it right to hang a man who is in such an imperfect state of mind?"

"I can really," said the judge, who found that question a very difficult one indeed to answer—"I can really listen to no more of this. It is too sad and afflicting."

He then, with all due solemnity, passed sentence of death upon Dick Turpin, concluding with the usual kind hope that the Almighty would have mercy upon him, as none would be shown him in this world.

"Farewell to you all!" cried Dick, "and if anybody here should happen to see Claude Duval or a friend of his whom I won't name, as he might not wish it, tell them what I said of them, and how they treated me up here at Oxford, for little or nothing, but because they had heard of the old proverb, that says—'Give a dog an ill name and hang him.'"

"Remove the prisoner," said the judge, shaking his head until the powder flew out of his wig. "Remove the prisoner!"

Dick was instantly laid hold of by the officials of the jail, and hurried from the dock.

"Come," whispered Claude to Jack, and they both made their way out of the court as quickly as they could.

"Well," said Claude, "What do you think of all that, Jack?"

"Think? I could hardly contain myself in court; I was half-maddened, Claude, at the whole scene; and when poor Dick spoke of us it was with difficulty I kept myself from calling out to him to be of good cheer, for we had not deserted him yet."

"It was well you did not, Jack."

"Yes, I feel that any such exhibition of interest in the fate of the prisoner might have been fatal to our disguise. No, Claude, I had enough self-command left not to do it, although it certainly was rather a struggle to me."

"That I can well suppose."

"But ought we not now immediately to seek our friend, Zadoc? I did not notice him among the crowd, and yet he said he would be in the court during the trial."

"Amid such a sea of faces as that court presented, I can very easily imagine we may miss sight of any one in particular; but if he said he would be there I would wager anything that there he was."

"And here he is," said Jack, as the Jew suddenly stepped up to them.

"Ah, welcome!" said Claude; "all has gone in the court as you thought and said that it would, Zadoc."

"Yes, of course it has; I knew it was all settled before-hand. I have found a lodging for you until Monday, for it will not be safe for you to be at my house, as it is known that I do not take in strangers, and your presence with me might awaken suspicion. I allude to my house in the town, for as regards the cottage, it should only be gone to upon an emergency, and never to remain in it for a longer period than the emergency may last. Follow me."

"In all things as regards this affair," said Claude, "we, of course, yield implicitly to your guidance."

They now followed Zadoc past one of the college gates; and in a small but pretty street of houses, Zadoc stopped and tapped at the little parlour window of one of them. The door was immediately opened by a young woman.

"Here are your lodgers," said the Jew. "You will find them quiet enough, and if you don't interfere with them, they won't interfere with you."

"Oh, surely not," replied the woman. "Walk in, gentlemen, walk in! Here's the room, and the bed-rooms are both above."

"That will do very well," said Claude. And when the young woman had left them alone with Zadoc, the latter said:—

"I would by no means advise you to keep yourselves prisoners here. The impression in this house is, that you have some business connected with the assizes. Go out and about as much as you like, but take care always to be at home between nine and ten—three and four—eight and nine,—for it will be during some of those hours that I will call upon you. And as regards all the minor arrangements we were to do, you may make your minds perfectly easy. They will all go on smoothly enough, so that if the plan succeed it will fairly do so upon its own merits; if it fail, it will not be from any hitch in the machinery."

"It is pleasant to hear you say all that," replied Claude. "There is only one thing else that, if it could be by any possibility managed, would give both myself and Jack great pleasure."

"What is it?"

"In letting Dick Turpin know by some means that he is not quite destitute, and may not give hope adieu."

"I have been thinking of that and will try it; it would give me great satisfaction, and, besides, it would keep up Dick's strength, for he will need it all; and when a man fancies there is no longer any hope for him in this world, he is apt to be careless enough of his food and drink. Now, as he is condemned to death, they will let him have, in a reasonable way, all that he likes."

"To be sure; and he might get himself well up to any excitement by Monday next," said Jack.

"Yes; and the new governor of the prison is quite amiably disposed towards him," added Zadoc, "since it has been all through him and his friends that the vacancy was made, that enabled him to slip into the situation. Therefore, you may depend that I will do what I can to let Dick know that he should take care of himself until Monday morning; if I cannot I will let you know."

With this, the Jew left them; but Claude and Jack felt so dull in their lodging that they were glad enough to avail themselves of the advice of Zadoc, to go out. They took good care, however, to be in at the time he had named, and it was on Sunday morning that he came to them again.

"Dick knows something," he said. "I ascertained that they had placed him in a cell not very far removed from the outer wall of the prison, and last night I got a man to sing a ballad in such a stentorian style of voice that he could not but hear it. They have taken the man into custody, but I feel tolerably certain that Dick knows something will be attempted for him."

"What ballad was it?" said Jack.

"It's only a piece of doggrel, got up for the occasion. It ran thus,—

' We wish him to eat and to drink;
And Bess, she is well taken care of.
C— and J—, both are in town,
And they won't let the grabs hurt a hair of
His head, tol lol de rol lol!'

And there was much more to the same purpose, which, I feel assured, Dick was sharp-witted enough to understand in a moment; but I doubt if the police could make anything of it, and, even if they did, it will puzzle them, and they won't know what to do."

"I am of your opinion," said Claude; "and I shall sleep more comfortably to-night, when I think that Dick don't look forward to the dance upon nothing on Monday morning next."

"But, about the hangman," said Jack. "Have you succeeded in arranging anything with him?"

"Yes; and to-night, at eleven o'clock, I will take you both to his house, for it is necessary that he should know you; and once again, let me assure you that you may banish all idea of anything in the shape of trickery upon his part. He is too well paid by me in more ways than one, and he is much more my servant than he is the servant of the corporation."

"We shall be ready to the minute," said Claude.

We need not go through with the trivial events of that Sunday in Oxford. Suffice it to say, that it hung frightfully heavy upon the hands of Jack and Claude, and that the incessant bell-ringing was enough to drive any reasonable persons right out of their wits. The hour, however, came at last for the very interesting interview with the executioner to take place.

Zadoc came to the lodging about a quarter before the time appointed, and as both Claude and Jack had been ready for him some time, they immediately all sallied out together.

"Nothing new, I suppose?" said Claude.

"No; except a confirmation of my opinion, that Dick Turpin quite fully understood the song, for I hear that he demands nothing but mutton chops and port wine."

"And do they give them to him?"

"I shouldn't wonder but they do. It's an old custom to be liberal to any one condemned to death, and whom the authorities feel tolerably certain will not be reprieved; so we have nothing to fear from the idea of Dick being weak and out of condition to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE Oxford hangman's house was about half a mile on the outside of the town. It was a pretty enough place, surrounded by a little garden, so far as Claude and Jack could see of it at that hour of the night.

"What do you expect to find this man?" said Zadoc, as they rung at the gate-bell of the cottage belonging to the executioner.

"He should be," said Claude, "rather a burly ruffian."

"Yes," said Jack, "and with nothing but animal appetites, and about as small a share of intellect as may enable anybody to get through the ordinary course of everyday life."

"You really think so?"

"Such an idea of a hangman comes up to our notions of what he ought to be," said Claude; "but I have seen quite enough of life to know how our ideal notions of things, and of people, are often found to be at striking variance with the fact."

"You are right there," said Zadoc; "you should always distrust what your imagination tells you. I never went to a strange place in my life but what it turned out to be as different as it possibly could from what my fancy had pictured it; and I never got into the company of a person that I had heard of, and formed an idea concerning, that I did not find him or her something widely different from all that I had previously, perhaps at great pains, pictured."

"From all which," said Jack, "we are to conclude that we are very wrong about the Oxford hangman?"

The Jew nodded.

"Well," said Claude, "so long as he does not play us false, and answers our purpose regarding poor Dick, he may be what he likes, and I shall consider him the pearl of executioners, and always shall have a friendly feeling for him. What say you, Jack?"

"I will strive to cultivate the same feeling," said Jack, very gently, "although it will be perhaps to me, Claude, a little more difficult than it can be by any means to you."

"Excuse me, Jack," whispered Claude, "if this is a subject upon which you do not like jesting. I did not think of you, and what you had gone through, at the moment."

"Don't mention it," said Jack, as he smiled faintly.

Poor Jack! He still could not forget the horrors he had passed through at his own execution, from which he had emerged into life again so very strangely, but to be only half the man he was.

While this little quiet bit of conversation was in an under tone going on between Claude and Jack, Zadoc had rung the bell at the garden gate of the hangman's house; and in a few moments, like a moving star in the darkness, a candle, in the custody of some one, came down to the gate, and a soft musical voice then said—

"Who is there?"

"I want your father, my dear," said the Jew; "you know me?"

"Oh, yes; you are our friend, Mr. Zadoc. Come in—come in. Father said that he expected you would come, and bring two gentlemen with you."

"Yes, and here they are."

The little girl—for such she was, and not above twelve years of age—held up the light, and curtsied to Claude and Jack, as she held open the garden gate for them to enter by. The faint rays of the light fell upon her face, and Claude was astonished at her rare and exquisite beauty. As for Jack, he could hardly take his eyes off her, she was really such a piece of miniature loveliness to look upon.

"Your father is quite alone, of course?" said the Jew.

"Oh yes, sir, quite; and he is expecting you."

The little girl led the way up a trimly kept narrow garden path, and the Jew said to her as he followed her—

“You are as fond of your garden as ever, Emma, I presume, by the way in which you keep it. I see it is as trim and carefully got up as ever; even now I can smell the perfume of the sweet flowers that you have in such rare abundance, and which do you so much credit in the rearing.”

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “You know, Mr. Zadoc, that next to Pa, I love the flowers and the little garden.”

“Next to Pa!” whispered Jack to Claude, “she loves the——”

“Hush! hush!”

Jack did not complete his sentence, and then the little girl paused at the door of the little cottage, and holding it open she motioned them to enter. The door was so low, that both Claude and Jack had to pause and stoop at its threshold. The Jew was able to enter without that ceremony.

The little girl lighted them into the parlour of the cottage, and then herself retired to the kitchen. For a moment or two, neither Claude nor Jack saw that the parlour was tenanted, but a very small soft voice said suddenly—

“Gentlemen, you are welcome,” and then from a couch there rose a short and very slimly made fair man, with a small portion of hair upon his head, and apparently cast in nature’s weakest physical mould.

“Allow me,” said Zadoc, “to introduce you both to him whom you seek.”

“What,” said Claude, “are you the——?”

“Hush,” said Zadoc. “The word that was upon your lips is never, by any accident, mentioned in this house.”

“It shall not then pass my lips,” said Claude.

“Nor mine,” said Jack, with a shudder, for different as the Oxford hangman was from all his ideal notions of such a character, he could not but shake a little to find himself in the presence of one who filled that awful office, let him be in manner or appearance what he might.

The hangman very carefully closed the door of the room, and then he said—

“Gentlemen, Mr. Zadoc has said that a certain word is never by any accident mentioned in this house. It is true, and it is not that I myself so dread the word, but my little girl, Emma, is all the tie I have that binds me to the world. My wife is gone, and I have no children but her, and she knows not what her father is.”

“You astonish me!” said Claude.

“And me,” said Jack. “One would think it a thing of impossibility to keep such a secret from her.”

“Doubtless,” said the hangman, “the day will come, when some officious person will step between us, and kill her with the knowledge of what I am, and by what means I have fed and clothed her, and brought her up to gentleness and truth; but as yet she knows it not, and I am happy to be able to come home to one who does not shrink from me.”

“One would think,” said Claude, “that her very playmates would tell her, children are such bad keepers of secrets.”

“She has no playmates, sir. She lives here, the secluded life of a little nun. For five years she has never once crossed the threshold of the gate which she opened to admit you to the garden. All her delights, and she has many, are concentrated in this cottage and garden. She and I talk together, but never of the world without, and she has no desire to go from the precincts of this humble home, and I need not tell you we are not troubled with many visitors.”

“This is indeed most singular,” said Claude. “You must live, though, in constant dread of the secret oozing out through some channel.”

He covered his face with his hands, and rocked to and fro.

“Come, come,” said Zadoc, “I have not seen you like this for years, and you promised us you would get over all this kind of feeling; I think, too, that now of all times you ought to be able to do battle with it, for I know of

nothing that can prevent your almost immediate departure for the New World."

"Yes, yes," said the hangman, "what a cheering thought that is. I will take my child with me, and thousands of miles from here, there will be no one to whisper the dreadful truth in her young ears, and turn her heart from me for ever."

"Yes," added Zadoc, "with the money which these gentlemen give me for you, and which you will earn by the service you will do them on Monday next, you will be able to go to America as soon as you like."

"Oh, yes, yes. What a cheering thought that is."

"It no doubt is, and ought to be," said Claude. "I will rejoice, indeed, that this transaction will not only, as I hope, save my friend, but likewise enable you to achieve so great a good. You can take to some other course of life in America, and no one need guess for a moment who or what you were in England."

"You think they will not suspect?"

"How can they?" said Zadoc. "You do not carry the insignia of your calling stamped upon your face."

"No. I think I do not."

"Quite the contrary," said Claude. "There is not a man breathing who from hundreds would pick you out as likely to be what you now are."

"It is cheering to me to hear you all say that; and yet, do you know, at times I have possessed myself with the idea, that there is a something about my looks which proclaims the dreadful truth; and when I have least expected it, my child has shrunk from me with a shudder, as though nature, in some mysterious way, had let her know that my arms were to be avoided as a terror and a pollution."

"All that is imagination," said Zadoc.

"It can be nothing else," said Claude; and yet, even as he spoke, he could not but fancy that there was a strangeness about the eyes of the hangman, which he had not noticed upon first coming into the room. Jack, however, who had said the least, had noticed the peculiarity more quickly than Claude had done, and had noticed it with a kind of inward shudder that made him wish himself out of the cottage again, and in the open air.

But after all, perhaps, while Claude and Jack were accusing the hangman of being the slave of his imagination to too great an extent, they were in reality giving the reins to their own fancy, and seeing things in him that had no real existence whatever; or if nature had given him a little peculiarity about the eyes, no one who did not know his calling would probably hit upon the fact of his being a hangman in consequence.

"You will get rid of all these feelings and fancies," said Zadoc, "and before you have been one month out of Oxford."

"I hope so."

"That is pretty clear. But now let us decide upon what is to be done on Monday. All money matters will be settled with Mr. Zadoc. Now I hope that no obstacle occurs to your mind to the carrying out the plan of operation laid down."

"None whatever," said the hangman. "It has one good recommendation, and that is its boldness."

"I am glad you think that a recommendation, for it gives me a kind of assurance that you will not shrink from what you have to do, from any fears of the result."

"My good, sir, what I have to do is so little, that, let me shrink how I might, I cannot hurt your plot. As I understand it, all I have to do is to be so unwell at an early hour on Monday morning, as to feel that it is quite impossible I can attend to the execution, and then from fear that the sheriff should be left in an unpleasant dilemma, I send you as a substitute."

"That is it," said Zadoc.

"Precisely," said Claude. "After that all depends upon ourselves I am aware, and I only hope you will not be troubled about it."

"I have no apprehensions. What can they do? My story will be simple enough. You came to me, I will say, and I did not know who you were, and recommended you to the office from the well known difficulty of getting any one to perform it, especially in an emergency, and only *pro tem*."

"Exactly, and you may depend upon me, let the affair terminate how it may, making my story tally with yours."

"I thank you; and if you are taken and condemned for your own offences to die, they must seek another hangman, for I am determined that my indisposition shall continue until I leave Oxford, which will be now as soon as I can do so, without attracting the attention and suspicion of the authorities. I must not be at all precipitate in the matter."

"Then it is settled," said Zadoc, "that this gentleman comes here at an early hour on Monday morning?"

"Yes, quite. Take care to be dressed accordingly. A shabby suit of rather common clothes will be best; and I shall say that you were a coffin maker by trade, and that I have instructed you how to officiate as my deputy upon the occasion required."

"Very good," said Claude; "call me what you please, I will take good care to dress the character. I fancy my best plan will be to make myself up to look like a dissipated idle mechanic."

"You may safely leave all that to me," said Zadoc.

"Not a doubt of that," said Claude. "And now we will leave you, and hope you will be happy enough in the New World."

"It is a hope," said the hangman.

Jack noticed that he never offered his hand to either of them, or spoke one word about any refreshments. No doubt the wretched man felt that he was too much repudiated by society even to take that liberty with a highwayman.

The little girl with her cheerful pretty face let them all out again, and bade them good night with a soft musical voice as she closed the garden gate upon them.

CHAPTER XCIV.

CLAUDE and Jack had now but little rest until the eventful Monday morning, as that was to decide whether this daring plan would suffice or not for the rescue of Dick Turpin.

At the hour of six in the morning, Zadoc called for them both, and took them to his cottage. By seven he had equipped Claude in the costume which he thought most likely to deceive the authorities with regard to his real character.

Claude upon this occasion wore a rusty ragged suit of clothes that might have been those of a mechanic that he kept for his Sunday suit in prosperous times, but which he had long taken recklessly into ordinary use, and subjected to all the wear and tear of a dissolute life. A dirty apron was twisted round his waist with a ragged corner of it hanging down, and the Jew, with amazing art, painted the face of Claude so that he looked a good ten years older than he really was.

When Duval looked at himself in the glass, he cried out—

"This disguise is perfect. What do you think of it, Jack?"

"That it could not be better. Now, Mr. Zadoc, what do you advise me to wear upon this interesting occasion!"

"I have thought of that," said the Jew. "You will not only be mounted yourself, but you will have the care of Claude's horse, and of Dick Turpin's; so I shall put you in the costume of a common livery-stable helper, in order to give the affair the appearance as if you had been sent out with the two horses either to take them somewhere, or ordered merely to give them a little exercise. It will then look very natural that passing by the place of

execution, you should stop to see what is going on, and get as close to the scaffold as you can."

"Yes," said Jack, "nothing could be better than that. Pray, Mr. Zadoc, be so good as to equip me as quickly as you can in my stable costume, and you may safely trust me to act the character."

"Of that I have no doubt."

There was now but little time to lose, and with great alacrity Jack was got up in the costume that Zadoc had mentioned. He wore a pair of very voluminous shorts, with a good assortment of pearl buttons at the knees, and they were then fastened, after being given that peculiar twist that is so much affected by those who occupy a stable position. Below these he wore drab gaiters. All that he had upon his upper man was a very low-flapped waist-coat, with sleeves to it; and on his head he wore a seal-skin cap. Around his neck he had a pink spotted cravat; and when he was thus completed, and stood with the end of a long straw in his mouth, as though he had just come in a highly contemplative mood from some stable-yard, he looked quite picturesque.

"Upon my word, Jack," said Claude, "I don't think I should have known you myself; the transformation is, indeed, most complete."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the Jew; "for, somehow or another, the authorities of Oxford have got a pretty good description of both your persons now."

"Have they, indeed?"

"Yes; and I suppose it has been from the Innkeeper where you put up, when first you arrived, before the hazardous attempt upon the prison."

"Not a doubt—not a doubt. Well, if they don't find us out now, I will forgive them for finding us upon that occasion; and this much I will say, that if I and Dick get mounted, they won't need to give themselves the trouble of coming after us, for it will be all in vain if they do. We shall go three miles to their two. If that don't quickly distance them, I don't know what will."

"Nor I, either," said Zadoc. "Are you both ready?"

"Quite! quite!"

"Then you, Jack, go to the stable, and get the horses ready; and you, Claude, come along with me, to the hangman's cottage, for he will be not a little impatient about this affair, I'll warrant, since you know what a great object he has in view regarding it."

"Yes; that was what tempted him, no doubt."

"It was."

"And you knew that it would tempt him?"

"Fortunately I did, or I should hardly have risked my position in the city, by tampering with him; I believe that I am the only friend he has in the whole of Oxford, and he has always been grateful to me, because I did not despise him, but at times passed an hour or so at his cottage along with him and his little girl."

"It is a capital thing for us, that you thought even of doing so, for, without his connivance, this plan, which, the more I look at it, seems to me the more possible and likely of success, would have been but a piece of madness, resulting in the throwing away of our lives."

"Good-by, Claude," said Jack; "if anything happens & miss, let this be a farewell."

"No, Jack, we will not take leave of each other now. It looks like anticipating the future. I will not say good-by, but I will say good-day."

"Well," said Jack, "well, be it so; I will only say good-day."

They shook hands, and separated.

"Do you think," said Zadoc, "that he will be firm enough?"

"Yes, quite so; I never knew Jack to fail once in an enterprise yet, when it comes to the actual execution of it, whatever might be his feelings beforehand."

"I am glad to hear you say that; it gives one confidence."

They soon cleared the distance between the Jew's cottage and the hangman's little abode, and, as before, they were let in by the little girl, who had not the smallest recollection of Claude, and would evidently have gladly kept him outside, in consequence of his disreputable appearance, had it not been that Zadoc said to her,—

"It is all right, my dear; I know this person. He is going to do some work in the city, for your father."

Upon this, there was no further opposition on the part of the little girl, and Claude and Zadoc were in a few moments in the parlour where they had seen the executioner on the preceding evening.

By the open light of day, Claude was still more struck by his weakly and diminutive appearance than he had been overnight; but there was no time for any conversation now. The hangman merely handed Claude a letter, addressed to the sheriff, and then added,—

"I will go to bed at once the moment you leave, for it is just possible they may send an officer to know if I am really ill, and in that case I must of course be prepared to play my part; and even if they should send the jail surgeon, I think I can baffle him, for I will take some drug that will make me very sick in the course of a few minutes, if I have from my little girl notice of his coming; so now go, and success attend you. You have my best wishes; and until I hear from popular rumour that you have succeeded, I shall pass, shut up here, but a very miserable time of it, from my anxiety upon the matter."

"Come," said Zadoc. "You will see me this evening here, my friend."

"All's right upon that score. I am quite satisfied," said the hangman; "of course you will be sure to find me at home."

Claude guessed that these few words between them had reference to the money, and he paid no attention to them, for he did not think he ought to interfere with Zadoc's arrangements in that particular, so long as the hangman was satisfied.

They now set off, and when they got close to the town, Zadoc said,—*"Now, my friend, I leave you to your own resources, and to play your part as best you may. You will go direct to the jail with the letter, and, when they find it is addressed to the sheriff, they will let you into the lobby at once, and allow you to wait for an answer there. Of course, now, all depends upon your own address."*

"I know it. You and I will meet again as agreed."

"That will do."

With a mutual nod merely, they separated, and Claude went upon certainly one of the most truly hazardous enterprises that in his life of strange adventures he had ever achieved or thought of achieving. Not only Dick's life but his own, and, in all likelihood, Jack's, hung upon the events of the next few hours; but yet he did not feel any degree of shrinking or even of nervousness. All he felt was deep anxiety for the result, and a determination that it should not fail to be a satisfactory one from any fault of his.

He walked rapidly and soon reached the jail.

Oh, if the authorities of Oxford could but for one moment have guessed who it was that appeared at the wicket-gate of the prison, with what glad rapidity they would have opened it, and welcomed him within its gloomy walls! Ay, welcomed him to the darkest cell they had, and the heaviest fetters they could place upon his limbs!

"What now?" said a rough voice, as Claude tapped at the wicket in the outer door of the prison.

"A letter for the sheriff."

"Oh, is that it? Who is it from, eh?"

"The sheriff will find out that when he reads it, perhaps; and as it is not for you it don't matter."

"Oh, indeed, that's the way you come it, is it, stupid?"

"Yes, idiot!" said Claude.

The man as he opened the wicket to admit him, looked as though he would uncommonly like to knock him down; but when he found that the stranger was about a head taller than himself, he thought it would be as well to let that part of his desire rest.

"The sheriff won't be here yet awhile," he growled.

"Oh, won't he, Jem?" said another man, who was sitting yawning upon a stone bench. "You forget that Dick Turpin is to be scragged this morning, and that he will be here early on that account."

"Do I forget it?" said the surly gate-keeper. "It would be no fault of yours if I remember nothing else, for I do not think you have spoken of anything else since the trial. What is it to you, I wonder, about his being scragged, that you are so highly interested about it?"

"It's nothing to me personally," said the other turnkey, "only I'm sorry for the poor fellow, that's all."

"You are? And pray, why?"

"Because, to tell the honest truth, he hasn't had fair play, and that's a fact. They have hung the poor fellow, or are going to hang him, because he has a bad character, and not for what he has done, and that's what I don't like. It ain't English-like, and it won't stand the thinking of, in my opinion."

"In your opinion?" screamed the other. "Ha! ha!—In your opinion! That's a good idea; your opinion is of a vast deal of consequence, I daresay. Hilloa! here's the sheriff's carriage already. Look alive all of you. The sheriff!—The sheriff! Ring the Governor's bell at once, and tell him. It is time to look about us now, and the less you say about your opinion, old chap, and about what you think is fair and what ain't, the better for you."

"I don't care," said the other, "who knows my opinion. What's fair is fair, and what ain't, ain't, and I sharn't say black's white to please anybody, no not if all the sheriffs in England were to be railing at me for it. They can but give a fellow the sack, and that I don't care a straw about."

A rattling knock at the door of the prison now announced that the sheriff's footman was determined his master's presence should be known with *eclat*, and according to custom.

The whole door was thrown open, and the sheriff, with his gold chain of office round his neck, made his appearance. He looked in a great fluster, did that sheriff, for he detested the job of being present at a hanging. It distracted his equanimity for the rest of the day.

"Come—come," he said. "Is everything ready now? Don't be behind-hand with anything. Let it be all done as soon as possible. A coldish raw kind of morning, too, it is. Come—come, be quick all of you."

"A letter for you, sir," said Claude, stepping forward and presenting the hangman's missive to the sheriff.

The result of the reading of this letter was that Claude was accepted in lieu of the executioner, and by good management on his part, aided by Sixteen String Jack, who was at a short distance from the scaffold, in the disguise of a groom, with two led horses, one of the most daring rescues that ever took place, was effected in despite of the officers, who were taken so entirely by surprise, that they were capable of but faint resistance. Thus was TURPIN rescued, and the THREE HIGHWAYMEN again at liberty to continue their daring exploits, and as if emboldened by their recent triumphs they now commenced a series of the most matchless adventures, in comparison with which their former deeds will sink into insignificance.

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In these days of folly and fashion, when every miss counts her seasons by the authors she has devoured and the milliners she has distracted, it is cheering to take up a book which is not all fiction, and whose pages are not all folly. To convey lessons of sound morality, and inculcate ideas of domestic virtue, through the medium of a novel, truly needs considerable tact, and much knowledge of human nature; but these are requirements that are fully possessed by the author of "Progress and Prejudice," and right cleverly has she achieved what is very evidently the object she had in view—as for this purpose only would she have introduced such characters as the uncomplaining Lady Meadows, the affectionate Amy, her daughter, the stern and unyielding bookworm Edward Hargood, and his retiring but ever watchful sister. The *dramatis personæ* are of very varied and somewhat discordant natures, but all are necessary to the rôle, and perform the part assigned them with such fidelity to nature, that the whole, when blended together, forms a unity of purpose not conceived of by the reader until the dénouement results in a volume of the most perfect and natural character, well calculated to elevate the moral status of society.

(From the Standard, Charleston, S. C.)

Although written by an English lady, the tenor of the sentiments expressed is so perfectly in keeping with the spirit evinced by Young America, that we are almost inclined to believe that the fair writer has accidentally found a home on the wrong side of the Atlantic. "Progress" is the American motto, and she has certainly a progressive spirit.

(From the Eagle, Crescent, N. Y.)

It is an interesting and instructive volume, and we cheerfully recommend it, feeling assured that it will be justly appreciated by the American public. If it is a *novel*, it is a *good* one, and replete with good, sound sense, portraying life in all its various phases, and with a truthfulness which carries conviction to the mind of all.

(From the State Gazette, Annapolis City, Md.)

To convey lessons of sound morality and inculcate ideas of domestic virtue, needs considerable tact, and much knowledge of human nature, but these requirements are fully possessed by the author of "Progress and Prejudice."

(From the Democrat, Danville, Pa.)

If you must read novels, read good ones, and of those who claim that distinctive title we certainly know none whose pretensions are better founded than Mrs. Gore's, and of her works none certainly are equal to this her latest production.

(From the Republican, Toledo, Ohio.)

The work before us embodies all the graces of style which have rendered its authoress a general favorite. and is, moreover, imbued with a spirit of high morality and a progressive tone that must strongly commend it to favor.

(From the Despatch, Baltimore, Md.)

A capital tale, by this favorite writer, told in that familiar style which has always made her works so welcome to the readers of fiction, who will find this one of her most pleasing works.

(From the Sentinel, Eastport, Me.)

It is an excellent story, beautifully told.

(From the Democrat, Newcastle, Me.)

It is conceded to be the best Mrs. Gore has written.

(From the Daily Transcript, Portsmouth, Va.)

It is an admirable story, most excellently told.

(From the Newport News, R. I.)

It can't help but be popular—it has all the elements.

(From the Piedmont Whig, Va.)

It is a highly interesting and well written story.

☞ We could fill a book with favorable notices, but the above will suffice.

Mrs. Moodie's Life Histories.

As models of quiet humor, genuine pathos, and richness and vividness of description, Mrs. Moodie's Works have acquired a reputation which will endear them to every lover of the beautiful and truthful in nature.

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OR, PASSAGES IN AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

Price in paper, 50c.; elegantly bound in cloth, 75c.

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It is a very agreeable and humorous work. All who have read "Roughing it in the Bush" will be anxious to read the early history of the fair authoress.

(From the *Daily News, Philadelphia.*)

This is an autobiography of exciting interest, and forms an entertaining and delightful tale.

(From the *Southern Advocate, Huntsville, Alabama.*)

Though it bears the stamp of truth on every page, it equals any work of fiction we have ever read, in enduring and ever-varying interest.

(From the *Saturday Evening Post.*)

Those who have laughed and cried (while in imagination they were Roughing it in the Bush) with Mrs. Moodie, will take up with eagerness this work which is, in fact, an Autobiography of the author's eventful life.

ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

Elegantly bound in cloth, price \$1.

This was her first work, and one which created great sensation both here and in Europe, where edition after edition was called for, and exhausted; in this country, also, it has had an immense run. We append a few notices of the press, from the thousands received.

(From the *Newport News, Newport.*)

Mrs. Moodie has acquired a most enviable reputation by her "Roughing It in the Bush." The simple, unadorned manner in which she describes all their mishaps, takes wonderfully with the public, and the book is having a great run.

(From the *Mercury, New Bedford.*)

It has deservedly met with the warmest encomiums.

(From the *Picayune, New Orleans.*)

She has acquired great celebrity by her "Roughing It in the Bush."

(From the *Presbyterian, Philadelphia.*)

The scenes are portrayed with life-like reality.

LIFE IN THE CLEARINGS; vs. THE BUSH.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

Price, in paper, 50 cents; cloth, 75 cents.

All who have read "Flora Lyndsey," and "Roughing It in the Bush," will want this book, which shows the state of society in the Clearings, in contrast to the Bush; and abounds in quiet humor and brilliant descriptions of persons and things which Mrs. Moodie saw in the course of her travels in search of health. We venture the assertion that the fascination of these pages is such that no one who once commences the perusal will desire to lay it down till finished. It is fully equal to any of her former works.

MARK HURDLESTONE; OR, THE TWO BROTHERS.

BY MRS. MOODIE, Author of "ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH," &c.

Price, in cloth, 75 cents; paper, 50 cents.

Of this brilliant work of fiction, the press speaks as follows:

(From the *Transcript, Portsmouth, Va.*)

A critical writer, in reviewing this book, says: "This work is one of the most powerful ever published by a woman, full of deep meaning, of stern truths, and pure morality. The greatest interest weighs throughout, from the first page to the last—a twofold interest, one arising from the delineation of individual character, the other from the windings of the powerfully imagined story. Like all works of genius, it has great simplicity of plot, and few characters. Mark himself stands out, dark and terrible, like one of the heads of Rembrandt's or Ribera's pictures, which haunt one in one's sleep—whose penetrating eyes would seem to follow you everywhere. Since the creation of *Rodin*, in the 'Wandering Jew,' we know of no character so original or so characterized."

(From the *Boston Bee.*)

The author of "Roughing It in the Bush" needs no other signal for thousands of readers than the mere announcement of a new work. And here it is before us, as charming a production as has shone in the literary heavens for a long time. It is written with great vigor and felicity, its characters are drawn with a nice yet powerful hand, while the incidents, like diamonds in gold, everywhere lend a thrilling interest to the pages. Let the reader procure a copy.

Three Great Anti-Catholic Works.

FATHER GAVAZZI'S LECTURES
IN NEW YORK.

ALSO,

THE LIFE OF FATHER GAVAZZI,

CORRECTED AND AUTHORIZED BY HIMSELF.

Price, in paper, 50 cents; cloth, 75 cents.

Himself a Priest, he is cognizant of the vices and abuses that exist in the Romish Church, and does not fear to expose them at the hazard of his life. The clergy and the press speak of his Lectures in enthusiastic terms.

(From the Portsmouth Journal.)

These Lectures go over the whole field of the religious controversy of the present age; and the arguments on the Protestant side of the question are ably and powerfully displayed. No Protestant can possibly peruse these Lectures without being startled at the statements, arguments and warnings they contain, and feeling his vigilance awakened for the safety of his faith, and of religious freedom in this country. Besides the Lectures, this book contains a carefully written "Life of Father Gavazzi, revised and authorized by himself; and also brief reports of his Addresses in Italian to his countrymen in New York," &c., &c. The volume is worthy of a wide circulation.

(From the Transcript.)

These Lectures having created considerable excitement throughout the country, a great desire has arisen among all classes to see and read them. No doubt they will prove highly interesting and profitable to all denominations.

BEATRICE;

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The most formidable opponent of Romanism that the Church has had this century. Over 40,000 copies have been sold. The encomiums of the press would fill volumes.

Extract of a Letter from Rev. N. Murray (the celebrated Kerwin).

ELIZABETHTOWN, Feb. 1st, 1854.

MESSES. DE WITT AND DAVENPORT:

In "Beatrice" she taxes all her energies, and the result is a work of deep interest and great power. Its object is to expose the deceptive arts of Popery and of the Jesuits, and this it does with great truthfulness and effect. It cannot be otherwise than greatly useful in aiding to remove from the world the great curse of humanity—Popery.

Extract of a Letter from Father Gavazzi.

NEW YORK HOTEL, March 3, 1853.

I have received, with much pleasure, the valuable work by Miss Sinclair. It is a work which can never be too often read or too highly appreciated. I trust that, under the blessing of God, this work will help to free the liberties of America from the yoke of despotism.

HELEN MULGRAVE;

OR, JESUIT EXECUTORSHIP.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOUNG LADY, A SECEDER FROM ROMANISM.

Price, in paper, 50 cents; cloth, 75 cents.

(From the New York Evangelist.)

"Helen Mulgrave; or, Jesuit Executorship," is the title of a narrative by a converted Catholic, showing one phase of the well-known intrigue and rascality which Jesuit priests are wont to practice, in the case of wills and estates of the dead. It is a tale to harrow up every generous and honorable feeling—and is all the more harrowing as the reader's knowledge of history will forbid his regarding it as at all exaggerated or fictitious.

(From the Genesee Evangelist.)

The writer here records her own experience. It is a lively description of suffering and perseverance, and a lifelike development of the art, cruelty, and blindness of Romanism.

(From the Christian Observer, Philadelphia.)

This is an able and sterling work of the kind. The discriminating views it gives of Romanism, and the scenes portrayed in the progress of the story, are sketched with a master's hand. There is a charm in the narrative, so true to life and nature, far transcending the beauties of fiction. It inculcates lessons of charity and forbearance toward those who, in their persecuting zeal for their sect, "know not what they do." It is a story of right, depressed by poverty, assailed by power, yet rising in its native strength, and battling with the wiles of Jesuitism, aided by the influence of wealth. The struggle, though fearful, terminates in a triumphant proof that "the way of the transgressor is hard," and that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." It will be read with deep interest.

Great National Work—Now Ready.

OFF-HAND TAKINGS;

OR, CRAYON SKETCHES OF THE NOTICEABLE MEN OF OUR AGE.

BY GEORGE W. BUNGAY.

Embellished with Nineteen Portraits on Steel. Elegantly bound in cloth. Price \$1 50.

The Publishers have spared no pains nor expense in the getting up of this book. It is well printed on beautiful paper, embellished with Nineteen Portraits, Engraved on Steel, in the finest style of the art, from Daguerreotypes which are considered to be the best likenesses.

With regard to the Sketches themselves, they are written by a man who, we hesitate not to say, has not his equal in this country as a powerful and apt delineator of any striking peculiarity of mind, morals and manners in our men of mark. Most of the sketches are of living men—though some of them have died since the work was commenced—and are life-like and true to nature.

This is a work that should be in the hands of every American who is proud of his country, and of the men who helped to render that country honored abroad, by their contributions to Literature, Science, Commerce or Arts. Though some of the persons in the following list are handled pretty roughly, still, we think most persons will allow that the hard treatment they get is deserved.

LIST OF PORTRAITS ON STEEL.

EDWARD EVERETT.
EDWIN H. CHAPIN.
WM. H. SEWARD.
JOHN P. HALE.
H. WARD BEECHER.
J. VAN BUREN.
G. C. HEBBE.

OLON ROBINSON.
P. T. BARNUM.
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HORACE GREELEY.
NEAL DOW.
OGDEN HOFFMAN.
WM. C. BRYANT.

GERRIT SMITH.
THOS. H. BENTON.
GEORGE LAW.
S. A. DOUGLASS.
JOHN MITCHEL.

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Daniel Webster.
Henry Clay.
John Charles Fremont.
G. P. Morris.
N. P. Willis.
Father Taylor.
John C. Calhoun.
Lewis Cass.
Charles C. Burleigh.
Abbot Lawrence.
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Rufus Choate.
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Dr. Boardman.

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Dr. E. Kane.
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Geo. W. Kendall.
Pierre Soulé.
W. Thackeray.
John Pierpont.
George N. Briggs.
Theodore Parker.
Philip S. White.
Charles Sumner.
Thomas F. Meagher.
Wendell Philips.
Elihu Burritt.
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General Winfield Scott.
Edward Beecher.

Wm. L. Marcy.
Alfred Bunn.
Peter Cartwright.
Anson Burlingame.
Dr. J. W. Francis.
Dr. S. H. Cox.
Freeman Hunt.
B. P. Shillaber.
Bishop James.
Rev. Mr. Wadsworth.
Rev. Dr. Durbin.
W. Gilmore Simms.
James Gordon Bennett.
Caleb Cushing.
James Watson Webb.
Dr. Duffield.
J. R. Lowell.
And many others.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

(From the Boston Bee.)

The book will be welcome. Dr. Bungay is an original, Young America-ish writer, and however much we may differ from him in the estimate of his subjects, we are always entertained by what he says. He writes like a man who is fully wide awake. His portraits sparkle with vitality. He keeps you not only from napping, but puts you a-thinking. There is an element of *straitiveness* about the man. What he writes stands right up before you, ready to face the music. The book will sell. It will be read. It will have a wide popularity. It is written in the right way for it; and if the author don't get his \$10,000 from it we very much mistake figures. The engravings are superb—the letter-press excellent—the binding gala-ish.

(From the Louisville Journal.)

Its author displays a very happy knack at description, both of person and character. The style of the volume is dashing, spirited, and easy, somewhat after the manner of "Giffilan," though without the ambitiousness of style or redundancy of imagery. The mechanical execution of the work is superb, and the admirable portraits with which it is illustrated are alone worth double the price of the volume.

(From the Palladium, Worcester, Mass.)

The book will probably have the greatest sale of any work that has been lately issued from the New York press. It is a perfect mirror of the times, and will be sure to find its way among all classes of readers.

(From the News, Middletown, Ct.)

"Off-Hand Takings and Crayon Sketches" is the title of a bright, sparkling, and refreshing book, just out from the press of De Witt & Davenport. In these days everybody likes to be posted up in the antecedents of noticeable men, and this volume will, therefore, be in extensive request.

(From the Chicago (Ill.) Tribune.)

The work has some grave faults, but it has some equally noticeable merits, and is worthy of perusal by every one. The style of the author is such as would make his book popular were there less attraction in the subjects.

(From the Spirit of the Age, Woodstock, Vt.)

These Sketches are remarkably well written, exhibit a fair and impartial sketch, and prove that the writer wields a fearless and powerful pen.

(From the Saturday Evening Post, Philadelphia.)

This is a book that will be read, and extensively too. We advise everybody to buy the book.

HO, HO! HA, HA!! HO, HO!!! HA, HA!!!!

Mirth for the Million.

THE GOBLIN SNOB;

OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A FOUNDLING.

With over Fifty Comic Engravings, and Illuminated Cover. Price, 50 cents.

The press through the country hail this book with one universal shout of laughter, and say it can't be beat as a mirth provoker.

(From the Sentinel, Canfield, Ohio.)

This is one of the most irresistibly comic works that it has ever been our fortune to meet with. It is full of fun from title page to finis. Every engraving, and there are some fifty of them, is executed in the very best style that we have ever seen. Originality and comicality stick out in every line. Laugh you must till your sides ache (for try your best you can't help it), at the terrible and striking adventures of the fearful Goblin Snob, and that young scapegrace his son, who no sooner gets out of one scrape than he is ready, and willing, to fall into another. It is just the book to take home and read at night to the young folks; and if both old and young don't laugh till they cry, they are made of sterner stuff than ourselves. The poetry is as comic as the cuts, and is a gem in its way. Get the book—it is worth twice the money asked for it.

(From the Sun, Montreal, Canada.)

This book contains nearly fifty comic engravings, and is, according to the title, "Imagined and Illustrated by Henry L. Stephens, Author of the 'Comic Natural History,' 'Billy Vidkins,'" &c. We hardly know what, to call it—it is a sort of poem; something of the John Gilpin stamp, with wit and fun in every line; and we have no doubt will prove very entertaining, especially to the juvenile classes. For ourselves, we are rather past the time of life to be in danger of splitting our sides from a reading of the "Goblin Snob;" but we did read it, nevertheless, and would recommend it to our young friends as a pleasant companion during the long evenings which are now close upon us. The numerous comic illustrations are well got up, and with the illuminated cover, form a handsome book.

(From the Sunday Mercury, Phila.)

This is decidedly the funniest book of the season. The author of the "Comic Natural History," "Billy Vidkins," &c., has, by this his latest production, "out-Heroded Herod." The illustrations, nearly fifty in number, are the very quintessence of comicality, and the descriptive poetry, to use a sporting phrase, is "neck and neck" with the engravings. Those of our readers who are afflicted with the "blues" should purchase and read this work without delay.

(From the People's Advocate, York, Pa.)

This humorous pasquil is the production of Mr. Stephens, to whom we are deeply indebted for fifty of the most ludicrous illustrations of the letter-press. We shall not endeavor to give the tenor of the story, but content ourselves with recommending all who desire to have a hearty laugh to procure the book, which may be procured at the low price of fifty cents, either of the publishers or of any of our booksellers.

(From the Record of the Times, Wilkesbarre, Pa.)

The "Goblin Snob," from these active publishers, is one of the funniest things we have seen for a long time. As it is just received, we have not had time to "learn it by heart," but judge it to be a history of an "India Rubber Baby." The comic engravings will make you laugh all winter. "So laugh and be fat."

(From the Evening News, Charleston, S. C.)

This is a series of caricatures, imagined and illustrated by Henry L. Stephens, strung together on rich pearls of poetic humor. It is an exposition of every diversity of snobbism, in which the illustrations (capital wood cuts) indicate no less fertility and variety of invention than the letter-press description is felicitous.

(From the Daily Observer, Utica, N. Y.)

This work is one of the most irresistibly comic, as well as original books that we have seen in a long time. It is unique and indescribable. The reader will only get an idea of it by examining it for himself.

(From the Dispatch, Baltimore, Md.)

The work is full of comic illustrations, capitally executed; and for driving away that most distressing of all complaints, the blues, nothing could be better. We advise all those fond of a hearty laugh to get a copy.

(From the Transcript, Worcester, Mass.)

Just the book to chase away care, perplexity, and embarrassment, and induce a good hearty laugh over the exploits and adventures of the hero and his family.

(From the Eclectic, Portland, Me.)

One of the *Punchiest* affairs ever published on this side the Atlantic. We have laughed till we have cried over the queer pictures and eccentric poetry which accompanies it.

(From the Boston Post.)

It is a queer and funny affair.

(From the Boston Herald.)

The funniest book of the season.

(From the Boston Mail.)

It is full of fun from title page to finis. Laugh you must till your sides ache.

(From the Daily Journal, Syracuse, N. Y.)

Originality and comicality stick out in every line.

(From the Herkimer Journal, Little Falls, N. Y.)

This is one of the most laughable books we ever looked into.

(From the Republican, Toledo, Ohio.)

The engravings in this book are capital, and cannot fail to draw a hearty guffaw from the gravest.

(From the Daily Union, Rochester, N. Y.)

It is decidedly the funniest book of the day.

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EXAMINED AND EXPLAINED.**

JUDGE EDMONDS REFUTED;

OR, AN EXPOSITION OF THE INVOLUNTARY POWERS AND INSTINCTS OF
THE HUMAN MIND.

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The believers in Spirit Manifestations have never received so severe a blow as has been dealt them by Dr. Dods. They have attempted an answer in a pamphlet written by J. S. Courtney; but the very answer itself shows, in its entire disregard for Scripture truth, that the doctor's assertion, that the belief in spirits leads to infidelity, is strictly true.

(From the Boston Olive Branch.)

This work appears to be a thorough philosophical examination and refutation of the Spirit Manifestations, as is represented by Spirit Rappings and Table Turnings. We are glad that some writer fully competent has undertaken the task of exposing these absurd doctrines.

(From the New York Tribune.)

No one whose mind is given to an investigation of the matter, should neglect the perusal of this volume. It is both curious and instructive.

(From the Boston Bee.)

Dods is a close thinker, and a clever writer.

(From the Boston Atlas.)

We recommend the book to all who take an interest in the subject.

(From the Sun, Phila.)

Read it if you would have a full explanation of rappings, mediums, and table-turnings.

(From the New York Day Book.)

We advise all who have been puzzled by the mysterious rappings to buy it and learn how the thing is done.

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We can heartily and confidently commend it to our readers, as thoroughly "unveiling" the latest humbug of our day, showing it up in all its nakedness and deformity, and leaving us nothing more to desire upon the subject of which it treats.

(From the Congregationalist, Boston.)

It is sufficiently grave and dignified, and withal learned, and really handles these tintinnaculatory humbugs with much good sense and sound judgment.

(From the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate.)

Decidedly the best book we have seen on the subject. It is a book of keen logic, withering satire, and unanswerable facts.

(From the Northern Christian Advocate.)

By far the most thorough exposé of the rapping delusion that we have seen. The subject is treated at large in all its varying aspects. The reasoning and the facts amount to demonstration.

(From the Religious Recorder, Syracuse.)

Thorough work is made by the author. Thousands will be saved by it from lunacy and suicide. Let everybody get it.

(From the Syracuse Daily Star.)

A vast number of facts which cannot well be overruled or encountered. We hope Mr. Mattison's book will have a large circulation.

(From the Worcester Weekly Transcript.)

Laborious research—a large amount of amusing intelligence. Every one will be interested in its perusal.

(From the New York Independent.)

A seasonable and useful issue.

(From the Richmond Examiner.)

A full exposition of those mysteries.

(From the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate.)

A book of keen logic, and unanswerable facts.

(From the Northern Christian Advocate.)

At the head of its class—a most thorough exposé.

(From the New York Evangelist.)

It ought to put an end to this absurd delusion.

(From the Christian Advocate and Journal.)

We heartily and confidently commend it to our readers.

(From the Boston Herald.)

A thorough and able exposé.

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BY AN EPICURE.

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The critical notices of this popular work in this country and Europe, have been so extended and enthusiastic, that they would fill a volume of many pages. A few brief extracts from these will afford a glimpse of the nature of the work.

(From Sharpe's London Magazine.)

The book is one of the most cheerful that could be conceived; it is brimful of pleasing varieties, gathered from all kinds of out-of-the-way sources; and carries unmistakably the marks of having been written by one who, having read a good deal, and observed a great deal, has mastered the happy secret of putting into the most attractive form the result of both.

(From the London Athenæum.)

"Our Epicure" is a literary gossip of the pleasantest sort. He has read much, and noted his reading; read with his mind awake, and with his heart open to the appeals of beauty. He piles up for the reader's delectation, thought, fancy, anecdote,—with a new flavor and fresh pungency.

(From the London Morning Chronicle.)

It may well be termed a *salad*, for the ingredients are gathered with a discriminating hand from the rich garden of literature. In every chapter is much variety: it is a mass of curious and entertaining reading.

(From the London Morning Herald.)

Every chapter of this clever book would tempt a man to seek solitude for the pleasure of enjoying the intellectual treat.

(From the London Globe.)

A quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore.

(From the New York Express.)

Every page is rich with rare and well-digested thoughts—expressed after a fashion that strikes us as both original and elegant. In a word, it possesses the aroma of many minds, blended with a genius that can appreciate and create.

(From the Courier and Inquirer.)

A *bonne bouche* for a quiet hour's enjoyment. It is a book which ignorant men may read, and appear learned upon the fruits of the author's labor. Such a book must needs be popular.

(Washington Irving.)

A salad peculiarly to my taste, and which I have relished with somewhat the curious palate of a literary epicure.

(From the Peekskill Republican.)

We have read this book with unmingled satisfaction and pleasure. It is one of the few books we delight to read a second and third time.

(From the Evening Post.)

In some respects, it resembles the collections of D'Israeli; but in this work before us we find a more manly tone of writing.

(G. P. R. James.)

It is not a work to be read, but re-read—and I believe the second pleasure will be fully equal to the first.

(From the Tribune.)

It breathes the fine aroma of the library, and reveals a lover of choice old books.

(From Harper's Magazine.)

A bowl of *salad* this as was ever concocted by amateur of literary dainties.

(From the Merchant's Magazine.)

It is one of the most fascinating volumes we have ever encountered.

(From the Philadelphia Post.)

Well-seasoned, succulent and racy.

(From the Peoria Republican.)

The raciest book of the season.

(Author of "Typee," &c.)

A most enjoyable volume.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SALAD FOR THE SOCIAL.

With Illustrations, handsomely printed and bound, \$1 25.

(From the Binghampton Republican.)

Good. We are glad of this. This author of "Salad for the Solitary" should write more than one book. We have never read a little work which so successfully captivated us as it did. It merited our unqualified approbation. The author is a man of taste and learning; and the more books he writes after the style of "Salad for the Solitary," the better for the reading public. There is no doubt, his "Salad for the Social" will be one of the great books of the season.

(From the New York Evening Post.)

The author of the entertaining miscellany entitled "Salad for the Solitary" has prepared another work, intended as a sequel to it under the name of "Salad for the Social." It is, we understand, in press, and will soon be published.

Great Moral and Instructive Work.—A Valuable Household Book.

SPARKS, BUBBLES AND TEARS,

FROM THE

HEARTHSTONE AND THE STREAM OF LIFE.

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EDITOR OF THE "SCALPEL."

Embellished with Eight Exquisite Engravings, from Original Designs, by DARLEY. Elegantly bound in cloth, gilt. Price, \$1 25.

"Human life is like a picture; the lights of joy
And the shadows of grief are both necessary for effect."

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The following extract from the preface will show the style of the gifted author, and the adaptation of the work for the social circle, that it is eminently adapted to refine and purify the heart.

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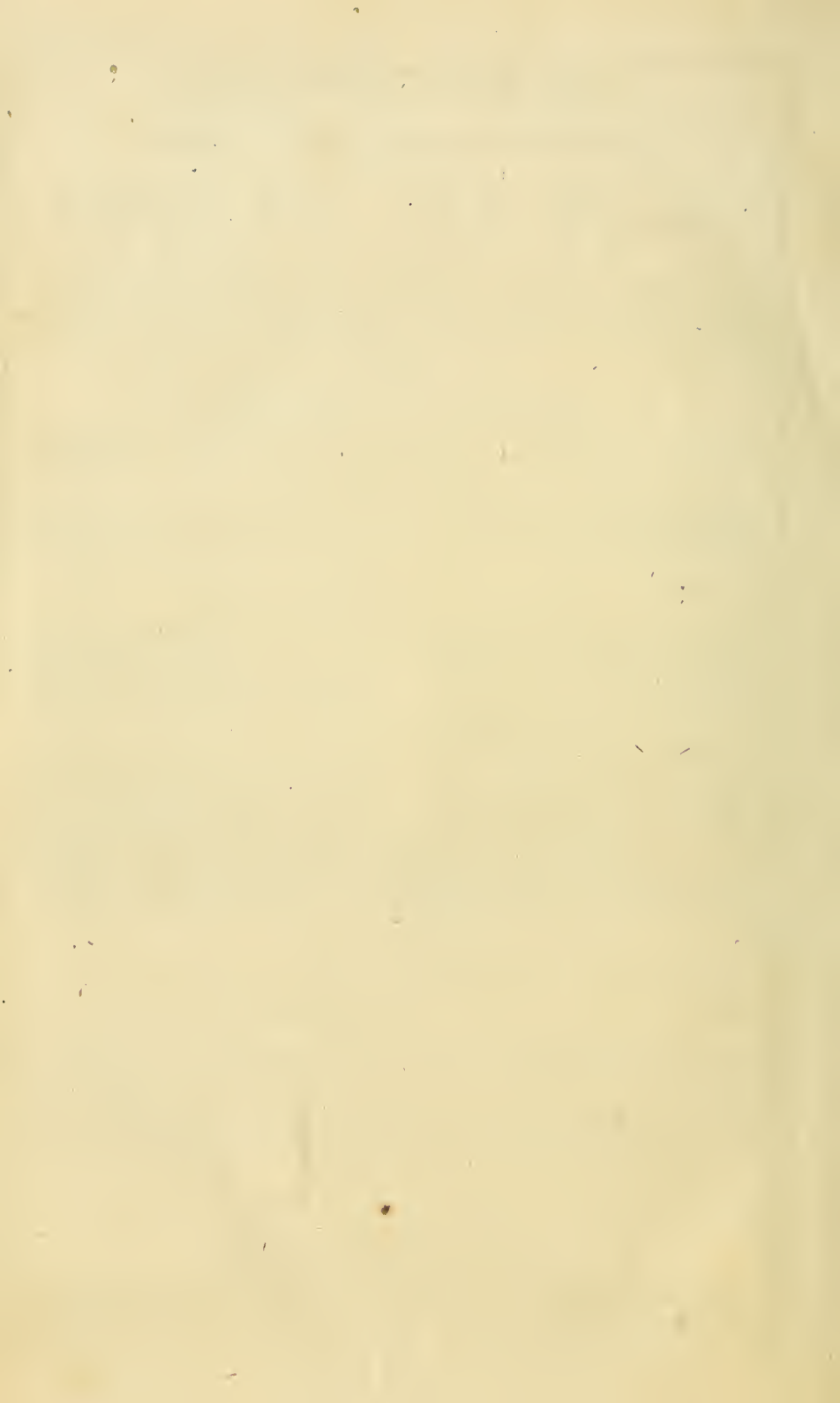
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